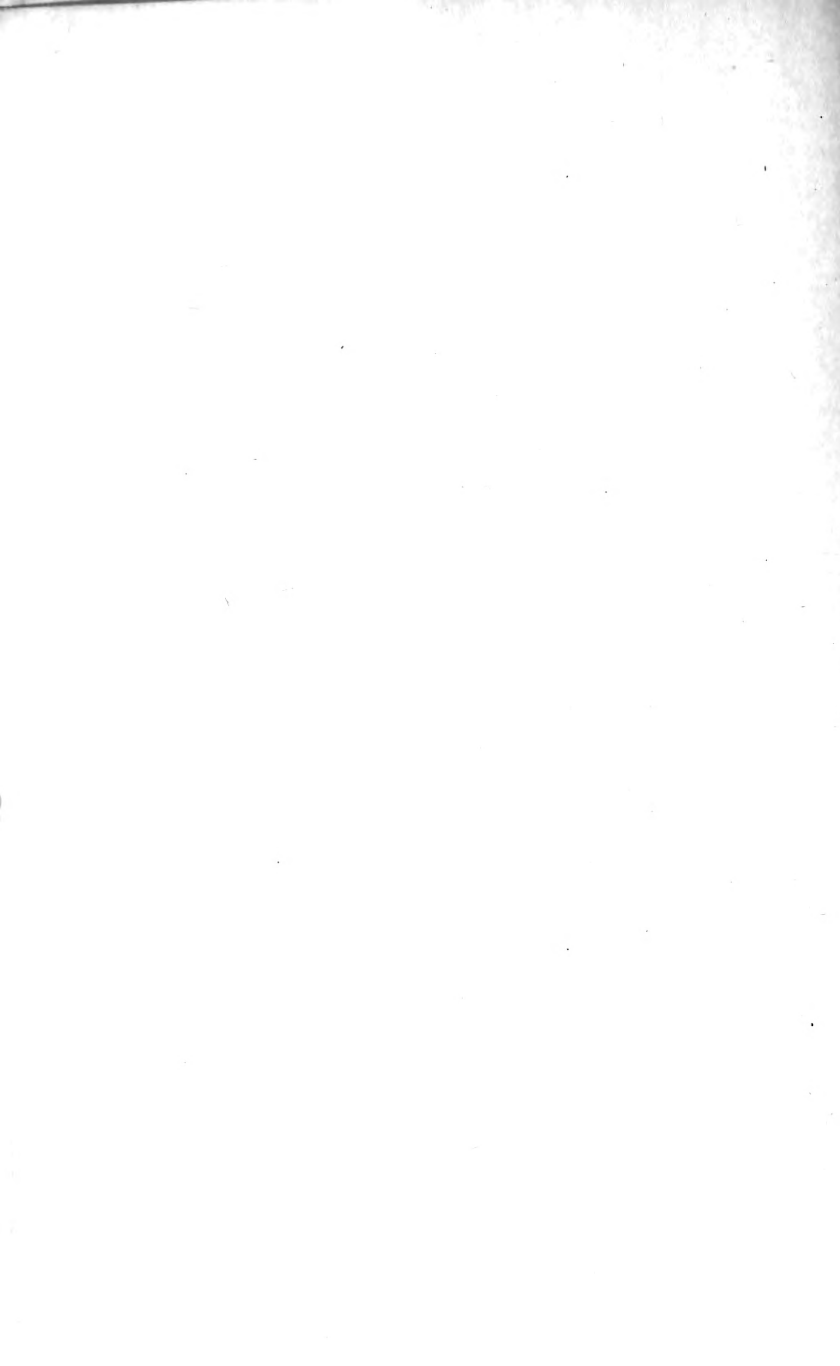


The Steadfast Heart

by Clarence Budington Kelland



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BOOKS BY
CLARENCE BUDINGTON KELLAND

The Steadfast Heart
Conflict
Contraband
Scattergood Baines
Youth Challenges
Efficiency Edgar
The Hidden Spring
The Highflyers
The Little Moment of Happiness
The Source
Sudden Jim
Thirty Pieces of Silver
Catty Atkins
Catty Atkins, Financier
Catty Atkins, Riverman
Catty Atkins, Sailorman
Mark Tidd
Mark Tidd in the Backwoods
Mark Tidd in Business
Mark Tidd's Citadel
Mark Tidd, Editor
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THE STEADFAST HEART

By

Clarence Budington Kelland

Author of "Conflict," "The Little Moment of Happiness," etc.



Harper & Brothers Publishers
New York and London

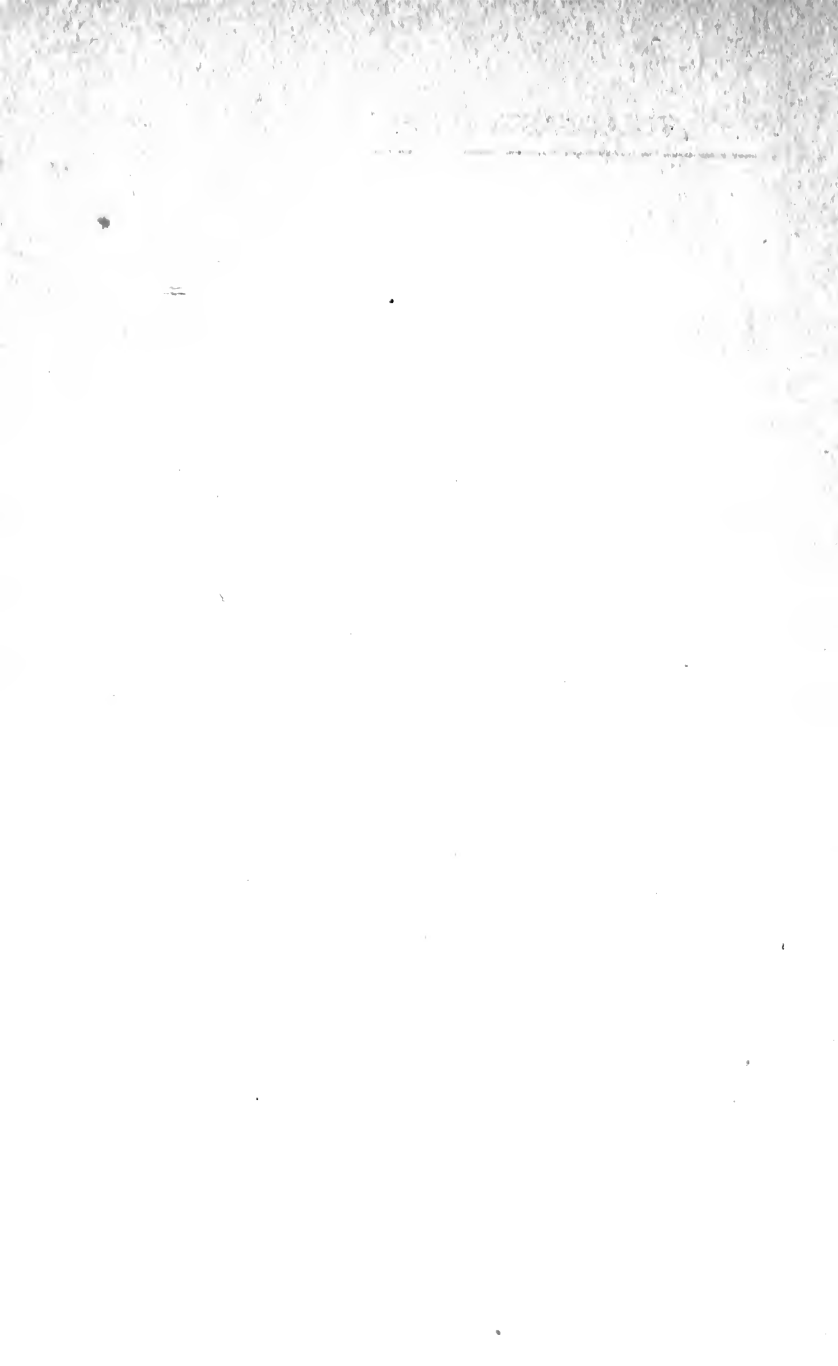
THE STEADFAST HEART

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First Edition

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THE STEADFAST HEART



THE STEADFAST HEART

CHAPTER ONE

THE house presented a dazed, half-witted appearance. One could have said that it was lost and bewildered and discouraged, and had settled down where it was through sheer weariness. As a matter of fact, it was not a whole house, but only the wing of a house that seemed to have wandered away from the main structure and then had been unable to find its way back. In reality it represented an unfulfilled ambition. Many years ago a farmer had commenced to build himself a home piecemeal. Inasmuch as a kitchen is a primary requisite in a home, he had built this single room with the intention of adding to it in the spring—but spring never had arrived for him. The northern exposure of the structure remained in what might be termed an anatomical condition—like the pictures of the man in the medicine almanacs who stands gracefully exhibiting his veins

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and arteries—for on that side the studding, which was to have been covered by the lath and plaster of the dining-room wall, had never been covered by anything at all.

It was a deserted house, unoccupied for years. Its shingles curled their edges upward, so that they had rather the appearance of the dirty feathers of some squatting, slovenly bird; its windows, such of them as were not stuffed with sacking and paper, had not been washed for a decade, and weeds and daisies and a rank tangle of summer growth extended from what had once been a picket fence to the very door. . . . Smoke was curling up in a negligent, shiftless way from the chimney.

Scarcely had the salt pork commenced to frizzle in the greasy spider when Titus Burke kicked open the rickety door and slouched into the room. He flung his black felt hat in a corner—and a little cloud of dust arose from it, spread and settled again, to add just that much to the accumulated filth of the place. He glanced at the stove, sniffed the odor of frying pork, and scowled.

“Sow-belly! Hain’t had nothin’ fit to put into a man’s stummick for a week.” Then with bleary humor, “Say, what’s matter? Hain’t none of the neighbors got chickens?”

Evidently Titus expected no reply from his

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son, nor did the boy attempt a reply—but went about his work—house work—with the same queer stolidity he had exhibited before his father entered. The thing was common to him, the whole proceeding, and made no impression upon him. Nothing made much of an impression on Angus Burke.

The woman on the mattress in the corner stirred, moaned, turned so she could see her husband.

“Did you get them for me, Titus?” she whined. “Where’s my black pills? You give them to me, now; don’t go hidin’ them from me. . . . Hand ’em over. Can’t you see I’m most dyin’ for the want of them? . . . If I was to die I’d like to know who’d look after you and keep your house and do your cookin’. . . .” She raised herself on her elbow and stretched out a skinny, bloodless, trembling hand.

“Shet up your caterwaulin’,” replied Titus. “I got ’em, and I’ll hand ’em over as soon as I git around to it. Think a man kin do everythin’ all to once?”

This dialogue, too, was in the ordinary way of things for Angus. He knew his father would tantalize his mother by withholding her drug as long as he derived pleasure from it. It was the common ritual of the occasion and he would have wondered dully at its omission. So would

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the woman. . . . She fell back sullenly and began to moan loudly and artificially.

Angus poured muddy coffee into a cracked cup, whose thickness was such that one had to open wide the mouth to drink from it. There was neither cream nor milk. . . . He carried it to his mother, who snatched it without a word of thanks, spilling a portion as her shaking hand carried it to her mouth. She drank until only a tablespoonful remained in the bottom of the cup and then demanded her black pills again.

“’S a bad habit, ol’ woman. Guess I’ll break you of it,” said Titus. “If I wasn’t to give you the stuff, you couldn’t git it, and if you couldn’t git it, you couldn’t take it—and then you wouldn’t go on disgracin’ me like you be.” This was also a part of the ritual, as was Mrs. Burke’s muttered blistering curse.

Titus walked to the stove and lifted a cracked lid. “Don’t you go cussin’ me out, ol’ woman. You gimme the respect proper from a woman to her lawful wedded husband. . . . And jest fer cuttin’ up sich didoes I’m goin’ to punish you, like it’s my bounden duty to do. Here goes your pills into the stove.”

The woman was inarticulate. From her mouth came sounds which were not human sounds. Perhaps even Titus was able to perceive that he had carried his playfulness too

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far, for he abandoned his joviality suddenly and threw the little box to his wife.

"There," he said with a snarl, "it's the last you git outa me, so make the most of it."

Mrs. Burke clutched her treasure from the floor and scuttled back to the mattress. Sitting on its edge, she turned her body to conceal her hands from her menfolk, broke off particles of blackish brown and dropped them into her cup, stirring them with her spoon until they partially dissolved. . . . Open she had been in her demands for the drug, brazen in her pleadings, yet, at the consummation of her desires, she still maintained a fiction that she took the drug surreptitiously. Some faint spark must have remained aglow within her. Still with her back to the room, she swallowed the mass and turned her face to the wall.

Angus Burke and his father ate their meal in silence.

After he had wiped the grease from the spider with a succession of slices of bread, Titus pushed back his chair and tilted it against the wall. His appetite was satisfied, for he was not dainty, and his long walk from Rainbow had dissipated the more disagreeable of the effects of his liquor. He was inclined to be genial after the peculiar fashion of Titus Burke.

He grinned at Angus with a tincture of malice

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in the contortion, for he did not like Angus. He did not like the boy, because when Titus joked he liked to hear the resultant cry of pain, and Angus would not cry out, could be made to betray no sign of fear or misery. It might have been courage, animal courage; it might have been mental and physical numbness, or, indeed, there might lie dormant and buried within the lad some store of real fortitude. Titus laid it to stubbornness, and regarded it as a species of filial disobedience.

As for Angus, he hated his father with the hatred of a dog which has been often kicked. It was a dull, inactive hatred, of which nothing could come. To run away never occurred to him, for such a solution of his problems required imagination, and Angus's imagination was to be aroused from its sluggishness only when his mother conjured up terrors. . . . And where would he run? Was not the life of the Burkes a constant running away anyhow? From place to place they migrated, occupying filthy hovel after filthy hovel—until moved on by irate proprietors of adjacent henyards, or by constables after an epidemic of petty thefts. Such was all the life Angus could remember—if he had sought to remember. It had been, "Push on. . . . Push on. . . . You can't stop here," since the day when he could scarcely toddle. . . . In their

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present abode they had settled a scant two weeks before, drawn to Rainbow by what Angus did not know. All he knew was that in a day, a week, they would move on again—and then again endlessly.

"Angy," said Titus in his most jovial tone, "how'd you like to be left the sole support of that there mother of your'n?"

Angus went on wiping out the spider with a piece of newspaper and made no reply.

"Nice boy!" exclaimed Titus with specious admiration. "Hain't he a good, obedient, respectful son? Hain't he p'lite to his daddy? Every time I speak he answers up pleasant and cheerfull-like. . . . Angy loves his ol' daddy."

The spider was hung on a nail and Angus began washing dishes in the tin hand basin.

"Hear me speakin' to ye?" Titus roared with sudden menace. "If you didn't I'll contrive to fix up your hearin'. . . . How'd ye like to be left the sole support of this mother of your'n?"

"Now don't go talkin' that way, Titus," said his wife from the mattress. Already her voice was stronger, more lifelike, for the drug was working its miracle.

"Shet up," said Titus briefly. "Don't go interferin' betwixt parent and child. Don't go settin' this sweet boy agin his daddy that he thinks so much of." He turned his attention to Angus

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again. "Don't pay no attention to that mother of your'n, which is a trouble and care to both of us and ought to be ashamed of herself. I asked you a question, and, so doin', be you a-goin' to answer it? Yes or no?"

Angus turned a dull, phlegmatic, expressionless face to his father. "It don't make no difference to me," he said, and went on with his work.

"Kin you look after her fine like I've done, keepin' her dressed like a queen, and allus smilin' and happy? Kin you be a good son to her like I been a good husband—pervidin' more grub 'n she could eat and humorin' her and lettin' her lay abed all day like a lady with a fortune? Kin you do them things if I go away?"

Mrs. Burke moaned, but refrained from speech. She did not believe her husband would desert her, but whenever, as was frequent, he threatened to do so, terror seized the remnant of her soul and she suffered.

"What you makin' that squealin' about?" Titus demanded. "Don't go interruptin' a pleasant conversation. Me 'n my son is speculatin' on the future, if certain happenin's should come to happen, which they're likely to do. I got a hankerin' to see the world, Angy. I'd like to travel off to Californy and Missouri and mebbly Europe. Wouldn't you jest be proud, Angy, if your ol' daddy was to see a king? Think of standin'

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onto your two feet and lookin' at a king with a crown a-shinin' onto his head! There's been Burkes that's seen royalty, Missis Burke. You married into the Burke fam'ly and you ought to hold your head higher. Seems like you hain't never appreciated the honor I done you when I married you. . . . I'll bet Burkes has called kings by their fust names." He pointed to himself and shook his head impressively. "This here husband of your'n, which you let on to dispise, Missis Burke, has set onto the same log with a governor—the governor of a whole state—and that there governor, which comes next to bein' a king, he up and calls me Titus. What d'ye think of that? He calls me Titus 'cause he seen what a ree-markable feller I be. . . . Now I'm a-goin' to look up a king and see what *he* says."

Suddenly his humor changed, and he banged the forelegs of his chair to the floor as he jumped to his feet and stamped to a far corner of the room. There, in the dim light, he withdrew a stained tobacco pouch from his pocket and took from it a roll of currency. This he thumbed over laboriously, counting with muttering lips. Even the shadows of that far corner did not suffice to hide the bills from his wife's eyes, and she sat erect.

"Titus Burke," she screamed, "where 'd you get all that money?"

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He turned with bared teeth. "Shet up. 'Tain't none of your business where I got it. Honest labor, that's where. Earned it with the sweat of my brow, and that's all the gratitude I git from a ongrateful wife—accusin' me of stealin' it."

"Oh, Titus, you haven't been and done some-thin' you can be sent to the penitentiary for?"

"Didn't I tell you to hush your mouth? Who's a-goin' to any penitentiaries? Not a Burke that's set on a log with a governor and that's goin' to see a king. Missis Burke, you pain me deep."

The woman struggled to her feet, her eyes blazing with unnatural light, her mouth twisted with fear. As she approached the dim light entering the open door, her face became more clearly visible. The skin was tinted with yellow, it sagged, and under her eyes were loose folds of skin. The eyes were black and glittering, not dead and dull as they had been an hour before, and the thought back of them was not now fear or rage, but infinitely more sordid than these, for it was cupidity.

"How much?" she demanded hoarsely. "How much money you got there? I want to see it. I want to hold it in my hand. Titus, you just let me touch it. . . . Ain't any of it for me?"

"Git back where you b'long. . . . This here don't concern you. I earned it hard and I'm

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a-goin' to keep it." A savage smile distorted his face. "This here's travelin' expenses. It's goin' to take me to see that king I was alludin' to."

"How much?" repeated Mrs. Burke insistently.

"I've jest counted up to forty-six dollars, and I hain't finished yit. . . . Hain't seen so much for quite a spell. Don't you wisht you had it?" He held the money tantalizingly toward his wife, but when she snatched at it, he struck her wrist violently aside. "G'wan back and eat opium," he growled dangerously.

"You stole it," she squawked. "You stole it."

Opium now owned full possession of the woman. A spurious flush made her cheeks more unseemly than before and there was a false sprightliness about her, an ephemeral, unnatural vigor which was somehow horrible to see. Her appearance was impious. . . . She moved closer to her husband.

Titus was weary of his fun. His lips twisted into lines of cruelty and he struck his wife so that she fell sprawling to the floor, where she lay and screamed, uttering shriek after shriek.

"Be still, you hell-cat," Titus muttered. For a moment he stood over her menacingly, then he stepped across her body to the door where he paused. "Don't go follerin' me," he said to An-

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gus. "You hain't wanted where I'm goin'—where I'm goin' for good. I'm trough bein' weighted down by you two, weighted down and drug back. . . . Now 't I got capital I'm a-goin' to git a fresh start in the world." He paused and waited for some expostulation from the boy, but Angus did not so much as glance toward him. . . . The woman's screams persisted, as Titus walked out of the door and down the dusty road. . . . Angus Burke neither realized nor considered that he was being deserted by his father. He moved about stolidly, indifferent to all that had taken place. . . .

CHAPTER TWO

HALF an hour later, drowsing in the twilight with his back against the lofty oak which reared its top above the yard, Angus Burke heard his mother singing. So rapid are the changes from despair to contentment when one is aided by black pills! The song Angus heard was not only his mother's favorite, it was her sole musical possession, and its subject was characteristic of the woman. It had to do with the exploits and demise of a certain famous outlaw whose crimes have been embellished with legendary glamor, and the song told of them in many verses which limped forward on maimed and mangled feet. When sung at night it filled Angus with vague terror.

"One dark and stormy night
When the moon was shining bright
The Denver stage was ro-o-obbed——"

the woman sang; then she hummed a few bars gloatingly before she brought her full voice to bear on the overworked refrain:

"And they laid Jesse James in his grave."

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Further along there was a bit of choice phrasing and of poetic sentiment about —

“That dirty little coward
Who shot down Major Howard.
And they laid Jesse James in his grave.”

Angus arose and went into the house, where the vague light of the dusty lantern seemed to offer greater security from the menace of evening shadows. His eyes were extraordinarily bright and staring, and he shivered with terror at the image of Mr. James and his exploits conjured up. Mr. James was very actual to him, in spite of the death of that gentleman reported in the ballad. Angus looked back over his shoulder at the gathering night fearsomely, and then crept into a corner where he crouched, watching his mother with furtive, hunted eyes.

* * * Mrs. Burke continued to sing.

She, like many another of her class, was obsessed by a morbid passion for criminals and for their professional activities. She rather specialized and was a connoisseur in grotesque crime, and was a sort of encyclopedic authority upon the gruesome details of every outstanding murder of the past decade, its perpetrators, their conversations following apprehension, but more especially their last words upon the scaffold. Last words upon the scaffold, when the noose was

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fast, held for her an unsightly fascination. They were her specialty. . . . When her miserable body was given a false life by the black pills, she delighted to delve into her store and to recount, in a tense, strained voice the horrifying particulars of crime after crime, until she worked herself into a state of unreasoning terror which verged upon madness. . . . Crouching over a smoking lantern, whose flicker caused uncanny shadows to move upon the somber walls, she would recount to Angus dreadful tales which frightened the boy so that he would sit panting and sobbing with fear, yet held him fascinated so that he could not wrench himself away. . . . She was teaching him the unnatural pleasure of terror. . . .

Ceasing her melody suddenly, Mrs. Burke leaned toward Angus with a jerky, alert, *listening* movement and asked in the hoarse whisper of caution, "Angy—Angy, have you seen any men lurking about—any strange men?"

Though the boy did not realize it, there were moments in which his mother spoke with another tongue than Angus Burke's; spoke with precision and correctness, used words in the manner of the cultivated. But Angus did not realize. In the world there existed but two sorts of people, so far as he knew, and they were himself and his family on the one side and a great, ever-shift-

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ing multitude whose hand was forever raised against them. He was afraid of every living soul except his mother, and what his feelings were toward her it would have been impossible to discover. Perhaps he had no feelings toward her. She existed, he existed—that was all. . . .

Angus knew what was to follow now, recognized the question as a preamble, a part of his mother's artistry. . . . He could not speak, but with wide eyes fixed upon her face, he shook his head in the negative.

"This is a lonely spot," said Mrs. Burke in a whisper, "and your father had money—a great deal of money. . . . You saw it. He might have shown it to others." As she fanned her terror to cold flame, it was to be noted that slovenliness of speech was discarded, elisions and colloquialisms were omitted, and she made use of the diction of education. "If robbers knew about that money! . . ." She sucked in her breath ecstatically, but drew closer to the light of the lantern and her pallid hand fluttered to her throat. . . . She was acting, yet she was not acting. . . . Silently she imagined for moments, then, suddenly, she clutched her son's arm and whispered, "Hush—did you hear something then?"

She listened fearsomely; Angus listened, and his teeth rattled together. He was not imagin-

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ing, could not, with his dulled, stunted, frozen mind, achieve to the heights of imagination. To him was nothing but stark actuality. She continued.

"There are robbers in Michigan as desperate as any in Missouri," she confided to him. "They're cruel. . . . When they rob they leave nobody alive to tell the tale. . . . They kill you in awful ways . . . when you live far from neighbors as *we* do—and nobody can hear your screams. . . ." She paused again, and then pounced upon the next words with awful enjoyment. "Sometime they'll come *here*—to this house. . . . We'll hear them prowl about—and then they'll rap on the door like *this!*" She shot the last word at Angus fiercely and illustrated with her knuckles on the table top. . . . Angus uttered a squeal of terror.

"They'll rap like this with the hilt of a big knife—and then—and then—what will we do?"

With parched tongue Angus tried to moisten his livid lips; he could not have spoken to save his life.

"They may come to-night—with masks over their faces. . . . Maybe they're on their way—after your father's money. . . . We—we must defend ourselves. We must be ready." Again a pause before she almost screamed the words,

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"Bar the door! . . . Get down your father's gun."

Angus crawled to the door and shot the bolt. He moved against it a wooden bench. . . . Then he took from its pegs his father's rifle and dragged it along the floor to the table where his mother crouched.

"It's loaded," she whispered, and moved Angus's chair to face the door, placing the table between. "Lay the gun across the table. Aim at the door. . . . If anybody comes and I say shoot—*shoot!*"

Mrs. Burke's terror now equaled her son's. No longer was she gruesomely play-acting. The play had become actual. They were in danger of their lives from lurking robbers, flesh and blood miscreants who besieged them in their shanty, lusting for their blood. . . . The woman's mouth sagged, the whites of her eyes showed under distended lids, and her voice rattled in her throat. She retreated to a murky corner jibbering, leaving Angus on guard. . . . It is to be noted that he remained on guard, finger on trigger, eyes upon the door. Even though he was beside himself with fear he did not desert his post, did not cower in a corner as his mother cowered. . . . He could hear her jibbering and mouthing behind him.

"They're coming. I know they're coming.

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. . . Riding down the road. . . . It's that money. Robbers always hear of money. When I say *shoot* you pull the trigger. . . . Oh, help, help, help!" Then she fell to moaning and to repeating over and over and over endlessly the miserable monosyllable, "Oh, oh, oh, oh. . . ." until the word seemed to bore tiny, icy holes in Angus's soul.

So passed an hour, the woman crouching, cowering in her corner, a squalid, unhuman sight; the little boy on guard, facing the door, waiting, listening, clutching the heavy stock of his father's rifle until his fingers ached and cramped. He had not moved. . . . Of a sudden Mrs. Burke lifted her unkempt head and listened. "They've come," she squalled, "They've come!"

To Angus's ears came the sound of approaching horses, and a spasm of terror wracked him. He wanted to scream, to burrow, to hide his face. . . . Then came the sound of men's voices, hushed, muffled, stealthy, menacing—and the noise of men leaping to the ground and moving about cautiously. . . . There was a pause of subdued conversation; then footsteps moved toward the house.

"Robbers!" Mrs. Burke tried to scream the word, but only a whisper came. "The robbers have come. . . . The light! The light!" She crawled along the floor to the table and pushed

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off the lantern, where, chimney broken, it gasped and expired, leaving the room in utter blackness. . . . Again she slunk to her corner.

Angus was aware that those without had circled the house. There were several of them, all silent now. The boy leaned forward, as though striving to pierce the walls with his eyes, but made no sound. . . . He was terrified beyond sound.

A heavy foot fell on the one unsteady step before the door and a rude hammering made the door tremble in its untrustworthy hinges. . . . It was exactly as his mother said it would be. The robbers were demanding admission, rapping with the pommel of a great knife. The rapping was repeated imperatively.

"Open the door," roared a horrid voice. To Angus it was savage, bloodthirsty. There was a brief pause, then another thunderous knock and a second summons to open. Mrs. Burke screamed once and then became silent.

"I hear you inside there," shouted the voice. "Open up before I bust in the door. . . ."

Mrs. Burke turned her eyes toward her son in the blackness; her face was distorted, inhuman, her eyes glittered with the light of insanity. "Shoot!" she hissed. "Shoot! Shoot! Shoot!"

Angus pressed the butt of the rifle against his

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chest; its muzzle covered the door. He tugged at the trigger with fingers scarcely adequate to the task—tugged, so it seemed to him, for hours. Then, suddenly, the trigger gave; there was a horrible, ear-splitting crash and roar that mingled with the piercing shriek of his mother. . . . Then all was silence, a dazed, stunned silence, while the room filled with the stinging fumes from the exploded cartridge.

Someone seemed to fumble uncertainly at the door; there was a moan; a scraping and scratching, followed by the thud of a falling body. . . . Angus, immovable, kept his eyes on the door—he could not have withdrawn them.

After the stunned silence came a chorus of shouts and cries and exclamations, then more silence, and a voice said hysterically, "My God, boys, he's killed the sheriff!"

CHAPTER THREE

THE village of Rainbow was in a valley, as all villages should be, with a clean, rapidly-running river passing through its midst and cutting it into the East Side and the West Side for purposes of local rivalry. You lived on one Hill or the other—if you made any pretense to living in the right place, and had bleeding hearts growing in your flower beds. There is something significant about the bleeding heart, for it seems to flower only in villages like Rainbow, where it can be unhurried and away from smoke, and where it can thrive on odors of actual cooking which waft from actual kitchens. In Rainbow housewives bake batches of bread, batches of cookies—the thick, soft kind with sugar on the top—they concoct fried cakes, which other and uninstructed communities incorrectly term doughnuts. Picket fences persist, and, in spite of the municipal waterworks, the knowing still carry their pails to Jenkins's well for the coolest, sweetest water which ever passed down a throat.

On the east side are three churches: the white

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Congregational church, the wealthy brick Baptist, and the yellow Universalist—and all these edifices of worship have spacious basements ordained to the uses of the church sociable and chicken pie supper. On the west side, at the very top of the hill, is the Catholic church, and at the very bottom the rather shabby and unpainted United Brethren. Nobody seems to know just who it is that makes up the membership of the United Brethren, yet it continues in spite of lack of bell and steeple. . . . Sabbath mornings in Rainbow, especially in late spring or early autumn are lovely, restful hours. Somehow the air seems sweeter for the quiet and one has time to be glad he is alive. Rainbow's church bells mingle in a gracious sound to call all sects and creeds to old-fashioned worship.

One sees Rainbow emerge at the ringing of the "first bell," father and mother walking ahead, dressed for the day. Father carries Bible and hymnal tightly under his right arm and walks with a manner which is not his on secular days. Nobody's manner of a Sunday is his manner of a Tuesday. . . .

There is a square at the eastern end of the Center Line Bridge where there is a town pump surrounded by an iron railing, and where, on a Saturday night, the band gives its weekly concert. . . . Main Street parallels the river, one

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row of stores standing with their hind legs in the water, as it were. Across the river is the grist mill, the planing mill, a sort of manufactory of odds and ends of woodenware, and the secondary hotel. . . . The depot and railroad are half a mile away, to be reached by travelers in Lafe Fitch's bus, a huge yellow contraption which can be heard rattling half a dozen blocks away. Prospective travelers wait to put on hats and wraps until they hear its clamor. It is a sort of alarm clock.

The population of Rainbow is something like eighteen hundred human beings, who live pleasantly, deal kindly by one another, and are, for the most part, to be envied. They are folks, good folks, generous folks—as you would discover if trouble or illness came to you in their midst—yet they can be hard, narrow, unyielding when circumstances seem to threaten their preconceived ideas of the manner in which the world should be conducted. There is no caste, no social class, yet there are recognized certain children with whom your children must not be allowed to play. . . . Rainbow is very meticulous in the protection of its young, and that, in a measure, explains and justifies the story of Angus Burke.

Rainbow was upset, shaken to its foundations, yet, in a strange sort of way, it was proud. It was the possessor of a murder for the first time

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in its history, and that no common murder, but the killing of its duly elected sheriff in the prosecution of his duty. It gave the town a new standing, an eminence among its neighbors. . . . All day boys and men had been walking out to the scene of the killing, and returning, had passed the jail and stared at its barred windows in the vain hope of seeing the monster who had perpetrated the crime. There was no other topic of conversation; business was at a standstill, and, judging from the groups to be seen upon Main Street, it might have been mistaken for a holiday.

An early caller at the jail was Alvin Trueman, pastor of the Congregational church, a man well liked by congregation and by outsiders as well, a kindly, compassionate, deeply religious man, who regarded his office in the ancient patriarchal light, and who, withal, was a jovial, humor-loving man, a pleasant companion and a good neighbor. . . . He conceived it his duty to call and to minister to the boy upon whose brow was branded the mark of Cain.

Chief Deputy Pilkinton was dubious. "'Tain't reg'lar," he said. "I dunno if I kin let you see the pris'ner, Mr. Trueman. I'm bearin' consid'able responsibility, d'ye see, and I got to do the right thing in the right place, havin' due regard fer law and order and the statutes in sich case made and pervided."

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"But the prisoner is only a child," argued the minister. "Of course you'll let me see him. It isn't your idea that I have a file or rope ladder hidden under my coat, is it?"

Pilkinton scratched his head, but, much as he desired to raise further objections, magnify his responsibility, and display his high sense of duty, he could think of no adequate reason for refusal.

"Wa-al," he consented, "I guess you kin see him. I'll stand cluss by the door in case he tries to do you an injury."

"Thank you," said Trueman gravely. One of the chief reasons for the affection in which Rainbow held him was that he saw, appreciated, and was considerate of the foibles of others.

"And say," Pilkinton added, "that there woman, his mother, died las' night. He hain't been notified."

The pastor stepped past the iron door into the little cell, smiling, and cheerily bade the small prisoner good morning. With shrewd eyes he scrutinized Angus Burke's face; saw dirt, freckles, dullness, apathy—a sort of animal terror—but not depravity, and he sighed.

"Do you remember me, Angus?" he asked.

Angus lifted dull, expressionless eyes and looked briefly at the face of the minister. After

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a moment he dropped them again and shook his head. He did not speak.

"I drove past your house one day when you were chopping wood. I'm the minister. I asked you to come to Sunday school? Don't you remember now?"

Angus nodded.

"My boy, when I was at your house I heard your mother groaning. She was sick. . . . Maybe you thought she was merely complaining, but she was sick."

"She didn't have her black pills," Angus said apathetically.

"She will never want her black pills again," Trueman said gently.

The boy looked up again, and a vague effort to understand passed shadow-like across his face, but he did not understand.

"Your mother died last night," said Trueman baldly.

If the pastor expected or hoped to witness a change in the boy's expression, he was disappointed. The tidings seemed not to affect Angus at all—it was as if the words had no meaning for him.

"She is dead," repeated Trueman.

Again Angus nodded. After a fashion he understood death, but still he manifested no sorrow because he felt no sorrow. He had not loved his

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mother, there had been no mother to love, only a woman who was one of the hardships which made up the narrow circle of his life, a part of his day's work. She had been there, and he accepted her as a fact. Now she would not be there, which was another fact to be accepted. . . . He had no imagination.

Alvin Trueman was shocked at the boy's indifference, his seeming callousness, for he was accustomed to seeing people act in quite different fashion on the occasion of the death of a dear one. . . . He began to fear that in so abnormal a child there might smoulder the distorted soul of one born contrary to the intention of God and Nature for the uses of crime.

"Aren't you sorry?" he demanded sharply.

The minister scrutinized the boy. The head, he saw, was well formed, with plenty of arch behind the ears; the eyes were gray and might be clear. They were level-set and not unhand-some. The two halves of the face balanced, that is to say, the right half looked as though it belonged to the left half and the whole did not seem to be made up of two halves which had strayed from their rightful mates and joined by accident. This sign of degeneracy was lacking. No, the face was normal. A twinkle in the apathetic eye would have made it pleasant and boyish, but there was no twinkle. Angus's eyes were like

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basement windows—or better, the windows of a vacant house. Altogether, it was the face of a child whose life had been monotony, dullness, in whom apathy had erected itself as a protective armor against cruelty and hardship. Here was a boy who had developed physically because the labor of a family was exacted from him alone, but whose mental development had been arrested, made static because no stimulus had ever been given to it. . . . It was a face in the balance; a turn of the hand might move it upward or downward. The boy was ten years old. At eleven sinister marks might appear; at twenty the whole aspect might become that of a slug-witted criminal of the lowest order.

Trueman was concerned and curious, moved by his concern to question.

“Why aren’t you sorry your mother is dead?”

“I don’t know,” Angus answered. Then, “It don’t make no difference—not if anybody is dead.” You see he was struggling to express himself, to put into thought and word some dim, struggling idea, some shadow of an idea.

“Angus,” said Trueman, taking another tack, “this is a serious business, an awful business. You are locked in a jail. You understand that. Because you are accused of killing a man—the sheriff of this county. . . . Do you know what they’ll do with you?”

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Angus shook his head and fright enlarged his eyes.

"Lick me," he said.

Trueman was amazed, but even in his amazement he was quick to see the terror his question had aroused.

"You mustn't be frightened," he said. "No one will hurt you. . . . Did you kill Sheriff Bates, Angus?"

"Yes," said the boy stolidly.

Trueman was shocked. The boy seemed brazen—to have no appreciation of the enormity of the act of depriving a human being of life.

"Why did you shoot him? How came you to do such a thing?"

"He was a robber," Angus said, and as the memory of those terrifying hours returned to him his face became ghastly and color left his lips. "He was a robber and he come after Dad's money, and Ma said shoot and I shot."

"What?" exclaimed Trueman. "What's that?"

Angus made an effort to explain, but his vagueness, the impossibility of his explanation only confused Trueman.

"Your mother told you to shoot?" he asked. "Why did she do that?"

"The robber come to the door and pounded like *that*." Angus illustrated and trembled.

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"What robber? What have robbers to do with it?"

"The robber I shot. . . . Mother heard him comin'. He was maybe Jesse James. He wa'n't goin' to leave nobody alive to tell the tale."

"Didn't you know it was Sheriff Bates?"

"It was a robber. He come after Dad's money."

Trueman was nonplussed. He could make nothing of it, yet he knew something lay beneath the surface which it was his duty to reach, and he determined to have it. . . . By dint of question and answer he drew from the boy the history of that evening—the arrival of his father with the black pills and the mysterious roll of money—the money which had sent Sheriff Bates to apprehend Titus Burke—the departure of Burke and the song of Mrs. Burke (Angus repeated verses of it)—the terrifying stories of hideous crimes, the terror, the woman's gruesome reveling in fear. So Trueman saw the picture and understood. . . . Here was no crime, no occasion for the rigid hand of justice to descend in punishment. Here, rather, was a child upon whom the pity of the world might well be lavished—guiltless in thought and in act.

In his mind Trueman acquitted Angus. Death had come by the boy's hand—as a sort of inevitable accident, an act of God working in His mys-

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terious way. . . . Even the best of men make strange accusations against their God. . . .

Presently Alvin Trueman emerged from Angus Burke's cell and ascended to the corridor above. At the top of the stairs he nodded to a tall, thin, coatless individual, who slouched against the wall for support and puffed uninterestedly on a corn-cob pipe. From the mop of uncombable hair to the feet in Congress gaiters the man was a model of indolence. He exhaled an air of laziness. Yet, despite his carelessness of dress and of manner, and sometimes of the niceties of language, you gained a feeling that you were in the presence of a first-class man and a gentleman—of a first-class man, who through some crotchet of fate or some minor defect of character remained a first-class man in a tiny sphere and was more or less contented that it should be so.

His eyes were gray and very bright and interested—though there was also a weary look to them. His head was unusually fine. . . . Dress the man, comb him, eliminate the slouch from his shoulders so that his six feet and an inch of slender height became visible, and there were few assemblages he would not dominate.

"Waitin' for you to come up, Mr. Trueman," he said, letting his eyes droop as if they were about to pause in the midst of the conversation

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for a nap. "Pilk told me you were tinkerin' with the miscreant's soul."

Trueman smiled—not an ordinary smile, but the sort one reserves for a highly regarded friend. "I was heading straight for the printing office," he said. "I want to talk to you."

"Um. . . . Prayer, politics, or personalities?"

"About this child downstairs. . . . He tells a story that is beyond belief—and I believe it."

"If you hadn't a talent for believing," said the tall, old-young man, "you couldn't keep to your profession."

Dave Wilkins, editor and proprietor of the *Rainbow Weekly Observer*, was the village's one agnostic—a sort of curiosity of which the town was rather proud. It pointed him out unctuously to strangers as a man predestined to hell fire and brimstone, and small boys used to discuss him in whispers and wonder how a man could get along when he knew for certain he was condemned already to the pains and penalties of the hereafter. . . . Perhaps it was to prove the inconsistency of human nature that he was the most superstitious man in Rainbow. There was no sign, apparently, in which he did not believe, from thirteen at table to the evil luck of walking under a ladder. . . .

Together the pair, representing religion and antireligion left the courthouse together, and

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it is not without its significance that when religion asked help in the prosecuting of a project of mercy it did not apply to religion, but to one whose Bible was a combination of Bob Ingersoll and Buechner's *Force and Matter*. They proceeded down the hill and across the bridge to Main Street, at the extremity of which, in a rickety, unpainted frame building, were the printing shop and editorial rooms of the *Weekly Observer*. As they walked, Trueman repeated the story he had heard from Angus Burke's lips.

"And there you have it," he ended as they sat down at a table littered with proof sheets, in a room odorous with printers' ink and glue and the myriad allied and alluring scents of the craft. "It must be true, because only an extraordinary imagination could have invented it."

"A new test of credibility. If a thing passes imagination it is, therefore, true. If a man who tells you a story has the brains to invent it, it is a lie; if it's a stretch above his capacity, it's the truth."

"Don't you believe it, Dave?"

"Yes."

"Then, of course, the boy isn't guilty of anything."

"He's guilty of the worst crime in the list—a sight of bad luck and a heap of misfortune and

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sufferin'. A Rainbow jury would send him to prison for life on those counts."

"You're too hard on Rainbow, Dave. . . . But there really is no need for him to be tried. Can't we see the prosecutor and judge and have him released?"

"Um. . . . Crane's prosecutor. He's bellwether of your flock, isn't he?"

"I doubt if that would influence him," said the pastor.

"There," said Dave with a touch of dry malice, "I agree with you. Knowin' him as you do, and his habits of character, would you say offhand he would *nolle pros* the first murder case he's ever sunk his teeth into?"

"If the boy is innocent, why shouldn't he?"

"Wa-al, Trueman, there's advertisin' and *kudos* in a murder trial—with elements like this one. For a week Crane'll be as conspicuous as a silk hat on a saddle horse."

"Do you intimate he would force the thing through for his own selfish ends?"

"I'll be mighty int'rested to see. Folks are mighty fascinatin' to me at a time like this. It'll be entertainin' to watch Crane run slap up against an alternative, so to speak. . . . Let's go watch it."

Prosecutor Crane arose as his visitors entered his office and stepped forward with an air that

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verged on hearty welcome—but fell just short of it. Crane always verged upon but never quite attained. As Wilkins said of him, he was a mite short at one end. He was somewhat older than Wilkins but appeared younger. He verged upon stoutness; the cast of his face verged upon good humor; his eyes verged upon frankness; he verged upon baldness. Now he was wondering what could have brought this pair of callers.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” he said, and insisted upon shaking hands with each of them. “It is seldom the law is visited by both pulpit and press at once. I hope I can be of service to you.”

Wilkins smiled his dry, spectator’s smile. It was characteristic of him—of a man who has been pushed aside or has chosen to step aside from the actual jostle of life to occupy a little grandstand of his own and watch the parade pass by. Crane did not fail to detect the smile out of the corner of his eye, and for an instant his expression verged upon a frown.

“We came,” said Trueman, “to see you about that poor child in the jail.”

“Of course. Of course. I might have expected that of your warm heart, Mr. Trueman. You’ve been to see him? Quite right. Quite right.”

“I’ve seen him,” said Trueman, “and—in his pitiful way—he told me all about it—about the

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shooting. He isn't very bright—not imbecile, you understand, but dull, deadened. . . .”

“He admits the shooting, I am informed.”

“Of course. He pulled the trigger. But that alone doesn't make him a murderer. . . . Let me tell you his story just as he told it to me—and you can judge for yourself. . . . When I come to think of it—from the way things appeared to him at that dreadful hour—he did a brave thing for a boy.”

“It takes a special kind of bravery to murder a sheriff,” said Crane, verging upon the ironical.

Trueman plunged into Angus's story, and told it well. Crane listened calculatingly. When the pastor finished nobody spoke for a moment. Crane's face was ruddier than usual, and his eyes, which had shifted to the window, were veiled. . . . They waited for him to speak.

“There are no witnesses to support this?”

“None. The boy's mother, as you know, is dead.”

Wilkins was certain Crane found relief in this corroboration of his understanding of the facts. He was giving his best consideration to the narration; weighing it, estimating its possible effect on a jury of twelve good and true men selected from the vicinage of Rainbow.

“You see,” Trueman said eagerly, “the child is guiltless. He thought he was protecting his

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mother and his own life. I—it seems to me there's something worth saving in a boy who could do as Angus Burke did. . . . As I understand it, the law doesn't punish acts so much as intentions. Criminal intent is indispensable, is it not, to guilt?"

"Perfectly right. Perfectly right. But—" Crane paused impressively—"the jury alone are permitted to pass on a question of fact. It is not for me, not for the judge."

"But isn't it within your province to investigate and to find that the facts do not justify prosecution?"

"It is," said Crane. "But in a matter of this importance I should not take that responsibility. Here is the murder of a high official——"

"Not murder. . . . Surely you don't believe a jury would convict the boy?"

"That," said Wilkins with an increase of dryness in his voice, "is what Crane's prayin' over this minute."

Crane shot the editor a swift glance in which was no little malice. "Duty," said he in a tone which verged upon resignation, "is not always pleasant. . . . I fancy the people would insist upon a trial of this boy. . . . Besides, if I let him go, what would become of him? He'd be a charge on the town."

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"How economics do clog the paths of virtue!" said Wilkins.

"You mean," said Trueman sharply, "that, knowing the facts as you do—knowing this child's innocence, you will, nevertheless, send him to trial?"

"I do not know he is innocent. It is for the jury to say."

"Then," said Wilkins, and his question was a pointed thorn, "as an expert in such matters, you believe there's a chance to get a conviction?"

Once more Crane's eyes blazed as he glanced at the tall, thin form lopping straddle-legged across the office chair. "I hope," he said, "that justice will be done. . . . I shall see that it is done."

"Have you no consideration of the element of mercy?" Trueman demanded. He got to his feet and his face was severe. In the door he paused. "You have disappointed me, Mr. Crane, as a man, a public officer, but mostly as a Christian, you have disappointed me."

Crane was a picture of resignation under the strokes of unjust misunderstanding. He spread his hands and shook his head slowly. Trueman and Wilkins left the office in silence.

"Wa-al?" said Dave when they were outside.

"What's to do now?" asked the minister. Then his face became determined. "Wilkins, I'm

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not through. That boy must be saved and I'm going to save him——" he paused as if searching for some expression to denote the firmness of his intention. Dave supplied it. "Hell or high water," he said.

Trueman smiled. "Thank you," he said.

"I calc'late we better get us a lawyer," said Dave. "There's young Craig Browning—just moved here. . . . Kind of sweet on your daughter, ain't he? Don't appear to be so busy he's turnin' away work. . . . My guess is he'll take this one free gratis to keep him from bein' homesick."

"I will pay what is necessary," said Trueman with a little access of dignity. He knew the offer was generous beyond his means; that it was rather a splendid thing. It gave him a certain pleasurable satisfaction. . . . Wilkins saw and understood and appreciated the simplicity of the man; liked him better for a touch of human weakness.

"*We'll* pay," he said, "but payin' won't be necessary. Browning can do with the advertising."

"Always imputing unworthy motives," said Trueman.

"Motives," said Dave, "make the world go 'round."

As they passed the post office an elderly gentleman emerged, accompanied by a little girl. He

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was a scholarly, aristocratic old gentleman, of a dignity to be won by a lifetime of fine living. The little girl was a beauty, with that most compelling beauty of vivacity. Already she had personality; already she was spoiled as one of her exalted station in Rainbow was bound to be. She spied Wilkins.

"Oh, Uncle Dave," she cried. "I want you to come with me. Grandpa won't come. . . ."

"Lydia Canfield," said Dave severely, "you leave me be. I'm single, and I'm going to stay so. If you don't stop setting your cap for me."

"I want you to come with me."

"Madam, I jest naturally can't, on account of being busy with something, that, thank heaven, can never touch your life. . . . I wonder if you'll ever know how fortunate you are."

Busy with something which could never touch Lydia Canfield's life! How little one human being can know as to what life or what incident will touch and mould, will ennoble or crush, the life of another. How could Dave Wilkins guess that the business upon which he was engaged was, in the end, to be of more importance to Lydia Canfield than any other event in her history? . . . How could he guess that the squalid, the unspeakable past of Angus Burke could be meshed with the glowing future of this child of good fortune? . . .

CHAPTER FOUR

JUDGE WINTERHOUSE emerged from his private room and mounted the bench, a dignified figure of habits and dress belonging rather to the early, leisurely eighties than to the generation of which he remained a part. He wore a Prince Albert. His shining collar was affixed to an equally shining shirt by a gold collar button, and it was only when he turned his head at an acute angle that you perceived that his white beard made unnecessary a cravat. He wore that mantle of preoccupation which is one of the trappings detaching the bench from the ordinary run of mankind.

A hush fell upon the crowded courtroom, and upon the unfortunates who pressed about the doors and thronged the corridors because of lack of seating capacity within. Rainbow was present *en masse* with its environs and even its remoter farming districts. Only on the Fourth of July or on Farmer's Day were so many equipages aligned under Rainbow's maple trees, for no incident in the village's history had so stirred it as this trial of the miscreant who had shot down

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its sheriff in the prosecution of his duty. Had the day been made public holiday by proclamation, no more people would have been present and no more lunch pails and boxes would have been packed.

Prosecutor Crane, papers in hand, obviously under mental stress, and equally obviously desirous that all should be aware of the importance of his position, took his place at the table. Young Craig Browning, attorney at law and solicitor in Chancery, occupied the opposite side, sitting with apparent nonchalance, and hoping his prospective clients in the audience would observe his ease of bearing and coolness in this first great moment of his life. His eyes looked dreamily out of the window at the early sunshine, as he pictured this day to himself as the first of a long succession of dramatic successes at the bar. . . . As Dave Wilkins had anticipated, young Browning gladly accepted the defense of Angus Burke, his only fee the twenty-five dollars he would receive from the county as the attorney assigned for the defense of an accused who would otherwise be deprived of the benefit of counsel.

Presently the door opened—the door leading to the cells below—and Deputy Pilkinton, solemn-visaged, of an importance unbelievable, dragged Angus Burke into view. The child was handcuffed to his wrist. . . . The spectacle

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tickled Rainbow's humor and it laughed nervously. A deputy rapped for order.

"Pilk hain't one to git venturesome," whispered Lafe Fitch, Rainbow's omnibus driver. "Notwithstandin', he's a brave man—Pilk is. Now, jest supposin' that desprit criminal took it into his head to run. Jest supposin'! With Pilk hitched onto him with a handcuff. Seems like Pilk 'ud git drug over half the county 'fore his arm pulled clean out of the socket."

The business of selecting a jury in a trial for murder is not one which is commonly finished with expedition; in this case it was completed with what seemed to the spectators undue and reprehensible haste. Not only did the assemblage consider that young Browning was slighting his client's interests, but, what was more important, cheating their own curiosity. They wanted things done in order with nothing omitted; and, least of all did they desire to have omitted searching scrutiny into the private lives of such of their neighbors as were on the panel. But Browning took only the most cursory interest in the jury. It is true he made two challenges, both peremptory, but these, as he explained later, were matters of personal prejudice, one victim being cross-eyed and the other afflicted with such a twitching of the left cheek as would have fascinated the young lawyer and distracted his at-

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tention from the matter in hand. Crane was more meticulous, but twelve good and true men were sworn and ready to listen to testimony long before the noon recess.

Angus Burke, released from Pilkinton's handcuff, was seated beside Craig Browning. One might have expected his attorney would have seen to it he was combed and washed and made as pleasing to the eye as possible—to create upon the jury a favorable impression. But it was not so. His hair was straggling and unkempt; his face not altogether clean. His clothes were no better, no more thoroughly provided with buttons than when Alvin Trueman first saw him laboring at the woodpile. A saddening, neglected, friendless little figure he was—as Browning wished him to be.

The boy sat immovable, looking straight in front of him as if unconscious of the presence of other human beings. . . . On entering the courtroom he had cast upon the huddled crowd a startled glance, and one tinged with curiosity at the judge upon his raised platform—as if he wondered vaguely why he had been placed there. After that he had fallen into that apathy which seemed his habitual state of mind. . . . He was a frowzy, pitiful object, dull, expressionless, apparently without realization of the straits he was

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in or of the importance to him of the proceedings which went on about him.

Malcolm Crane got to his feet and began his opening address. It was the speech of a prosecutor who seeks conviction for its own sake, bitter, full of veiled vindictiveness. It held the boy up to scorn, painted his life in colors calculated rather to prejudice than to express the exact truth. He described the crime and was apt to attribute a sufficient motive, referring to Angus as degenerate, possessed of a precocious-criminal mind, with dreadful inheritances from unspeakable parents. He saw in the child a menace to society, a sort of human mad dog to be shut away from the light of day and from contact with mankind. One inferred his regret that Michigan was not a hanging state. . . . An able address of its kind it was, and on the faces of jury and spectators could be read its effect. All eyed Angus with abhorrence, with repulsion. Their eyes saw not a boy but a monster.

As for Angus, he might have been listening to words about quite another person, one negligible to him—or he might not have been listening at all. His face did not change; no flush colored his cheeks, no shame or shrinking made itself visible. He sat like a boy of stone, with unseeing eyes fastened upon the steps which led up to the witness chair. It was no artificial garment of

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callousness that he wore, but the impassivity, the phlegm of a sluggish brain, a brain battered down by cruelty and hardship, a brain which had never been awakened to life by the activities and interests of boyhood. . . . In Angus's life there had been no interests. . . .

Browning elected to make his opening at the close of the prosecution's case, and then sank back in his chair a hunched, nonchalant figure, apparently neglectful of his duty and careless of what went on about him. . . . The crowd criticized. It looked for a battle of wits, for sharp tilts between keen brains—but this new young lawyer seemed to exercise but slight vigilance over the strategy of his opponent.

To Crane, now that he had estimated and appraised Browning, his task appeared easy. His manner reflected his comfort of mind. Clearly, succinctly, he established the killing and its relevant surroundings. Of these matters there was evidence in plenty. . . . Browning paid no compliment of attention to the witnesses, and, to the disgust of everyone, declined to cross-examine. Then his rating as a lawyer sunk to lowest ebb. Half the delight of a trial lay in merciless cross-examinations. Even Judge Winterhouse seemed disturbed and ventured a question which amounted to a suggestion.

"Do I understand, Mr. Browning," he asked,

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"that you do not wish to question the people's witnesses?"

Browning shot him a look, caught only by his Honor, which said plainly he wished no interference from the bench. It was not an arrogant, not an impertinent glance, and Judge Winterhouse felt somehow reassured that the defense of the accused lay not in incompetent hands and that Browning was abundantly able to take care of himself. He felt more so after Browning's brief reply to his question.

"The witnesses," said Browning courteously, "seem to be telling the truth. I am content."

Browning's opening to the jury was brief. "Gentlemen of the jury," he said in a conversational tone, "we admit the shooting. Angus Burke yonder fired the gun which killed Sheriff Bates. He fired that gun in circumstances which, to him, justified him in shooting and shooting to kill. I shall prove to you that Angus Burke fired in self-defense, in defense of his home, such as it was, and of his mother. . . . I shall prove that he was justified in believing it necessary to shoot to save his own life. This I shall prove by one witness—the defendant." He turned to Angus and spoke kindly, casually.

"Will you go and sit in that chair, Angus?" He pointed to the witness box.

Angus complied stolidly. He looked about

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him at the crowd and at the jury; then his eyes returned to Craig Browning and never left his face.

"Angus, do you understand what an oath is?" Browning asked.

Angus nodded.

"Please speak so the gentlemen of the jury can hear you. Don't nod."

"Yes," said Angus.

"If you are sworn to tell the truth and then tell a lie, what will happen?"

Angus paused an instant before replying, "God will be angry."

Wilkins nudged Alvin Trueman. "Get that. Effective, eh? That's Browning. He taught the boy to say that."

Browning regarded judge and prosecutor. "I think the boy understands the nature of an oath," he said, and Judge Winterhouse nodded. He was eyeing Browning now, giving young Browning the closest attention. The old judge and lawyer was beginning to see a light, as Browning's methods became dimly visible to him. Crane, gratified by his own skillful work, undervalued his opponent, and felt no perturbation.

"Now, Angus," said Browning, "I want you to start in the afternoon of the day you killed Sheriff Bates, and tell me everything that hap-

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pened—*everything*—until you found yourself in jail here. Can you do that?"

Angus began, speaking slowly and without emotion. He described preparing the evening meal, the coming of his father, the sordid tragedy of the black pills, his father's desertion. As he proceeded, as his dormant brain commenced to function under the stimulus of necessity, his face became almost animated; emotions were born. . . . It was a transformation. He pictured in the simple, graphic words of childhood the effects of the drug upon his mother, even quoting a snatch of the song which had contributed to his terror. So vivid became his recollection of the strangling fear of that dreadful night, that stark terror was mirrored on his face for the convincing of all beholders. Here was no acting, no lying, but a bare, visible human emotion. He cowered, his voice dropped to a hoarse whisper as he repeated his mother's tales of crime. . . . The jury leaned forward, ears cupped in hands, held by the boy, fascinated, gripped in the inexorable flow of the tale he told, moved by the truth, the terrible, recognizable truth of the words which described the tragedy of that one day in his life. . . . Now he began to describe how he had taken down his father's rifle and trained it upon the door.

"Then," he said hoarsely, "we heard a hoss

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stop and men git out. . . . Ma she screeched and I knowed it was robbers. Ma screeched agin. The robbers was still fer a spell. They had come close to the house and was waitin'. One of 'em banged the door like *that!*" He illustrated and a juryman started nervously. "Then Ma says, '*Shoot! Shoot! Shoot! Shoot!*'" He repeated the word four times, just as the woman had done. "Then I pulled the trigger. It pulled hard—hard." One could feel the agony of fear which must have been Angus's as he had doubted his strength to pull that trigger. "Then it went off—*bang!*" In his excitement the boy shouted the word. . . . A faint scream sounded from the back of the courtroom, but went unreprieved. "It went *bang*," Angus repeated, "and I killed the robber. . . . The rest busted in and drove me and Ma off in a wagon and fetched us here."

Browning stopped him. "Is that all that happened?"

"Yes," said Angus, still trembling, with eyes preternaturally bright and staring.

"Have you told the truth?"

"Yes."

"That," said Browning to Crane, "is all."

Among the spectators was a suppressed murmur, almost hysterical—and as the crowd, so with the jury. The twelve men who had in their keeping the life of Angus Burke listened to Mal-

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colm Crane's stumbling argument and to Browning's statement that he had no argument to make, and followed the deputy to the room set aside for their deliberations. Presently a rap sounded from within and the jury filed into the courtroom and stood before the judge.

"Have you selected a foreman?" he asked.
William Bowman stepped forward a pace.

"Have you arrived at a verdict?"

"We have."

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

"So say you all?"

"So say we all," repeated the twelve men in unison, but their words were drowned in the clamor of the spectators—a clamor of cheers and sobs.

For an instant Malcolm Crane eyed the boy malevolently, sinking deep into his heart a grudge. This child had wronged him, had cheated him. . . . Hatred of Angus Burke was born then, to live so long as Crane's life should last. . . . Angus continued to sit silent and motionless in his chair. He was bewildered, without comprehension of what had happened, without understanding that he was now free—just as he had been without full understanding of why he had been imprisoned. . . . He waited phlegmatically for what unpleasantness was to

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come next, for that anything save unpleasantness could come next did not occur to him. His life had been a constant looking forward to the unpleasant. . . . If, in his short life, he had ever looked ahead with pleasant anticipation, it had not been to the happening of some gracious event, but negatively, to the non-happening of the disagreeable. So he remained passive, waiting, his brain confused, his face stolid.

"Well," said Browning to Wilkins and Trueman, who had come forward with congratulations, "what's to be done with him?"

Wilkins shot a glance at Trueman and his eyes twinkled mischievously at the pastor's embarrassment; at the evident struggle taking place inside the good man to face the situation. . . . He could not compel himself to lift the burden. It was too heavy, and he turned away his head, with a feeling that he was betraying the high standards of his calling; that he was scantily exemplifying the teachings of the Master which he taught by word and sought to teach by the example of his life. . . . But, to take this boy into his home—he could not; his own children were there—the influence! . . . the example! . . . the association! . . . And public opinion.

"Wilkins," he said with emotion, "I can't do it—I can't."

Wilkins's eyes mirrored his respect. At any

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rate Trueman made no hypocritical excuses. He met the issue squarely and flunked it honestly.

"I calc'late I can arrange things for the time being," said Wilkins. "There's a spare room back of mine. Maybe it's a risk—my associating with such a person—but I guess he won't muss up my morals to speak of. . . . That'll serve for the present."

Trueman's face spoke his gratitude. . . . Wilkins laid his hand on Angus's arm. "Sonny," he said, "how'd you like to come and bunk with me for a spell? Don't need to if you got other plans. . . . You'll be as welcome as a sliver in a finger."

The boy's dull eyes scrutinized the man's face. What he saw appeared to satisfy him—if, indeed, he were looking for anything. He made no verbal response, but got to his feet ready to follow. There were no thanks, no exhibition of gratitude, no comprehension. Probably he was unacquainted with the emotion of gratitude, for he had known scant use for it. . . .

"Wilkins," said Craig Browning, as they walked down the hill through straggling, staring loungers, showing the first sign of embarrassment of lack of self-assurance the editor ever had discovered in the young attorney, "er—this is going to cost you money. . . . No reason for

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you to—do it alone. I—no reason I shouldn't stand half."

Wilkins chuckled inwardly. He was not one to deny to another the carrying into execution of a worthy impulse.

"Suits me," he said briefly.

And so, with two sponsors—neither fitted by nature or experience for the task—Angus Burke entered upon the second phase of his life—a phase which presented obstacles, difficulties, prospects of bitter unhappiness, heart-burnings, and misery: but which offered compensations, not the least of which was food.

CHAPTER FIVE

DAVE WILKINS, followed by Angus Burke, clambered up the narrow stairs to the living rooms above the printing office. Wilkins threw himself loosely on the carpet-covered sofa, doubled up his legs and grasped an ankle in each hand. For a moment he hunched his shoulders backward and forward until comfort was established; then he turned his attention to Angus, who stood just within the door—a picture of stolidity.

“Come in. Come over here and sit in this chair,” said Wilkins. “We’ll kind of explore each other.”

Angus obeyed, seating himself and fixing dull eyes on his benefactor’s face. He exhibited no surprise, no emotion of any sort. Probably he would have made no manifestation had Wilkins directed him to stand on his head. Somehow, in these intimate surroundings, he seemed less intelligent, more helpless, duller than when Dave had first seen him in jail. Obviously Angus presented difficulties.

“Turn your head,” Dave said suddenly.

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"There . . . I wanted to get a look at that bulge of skull behind your ears. Just to kind of chirk me up. If the back of your head was flat, I calc'late I'd turn the job over to the state. . . . Now, about that head behind your ears—do you guess there's brains in it?"

Angus comprehended as little of this as if it had been spoken in Scandinavian. His eyes dwelt steadily on Dave, neither staring nor scrutinizing—they simply remained there vacuously, as if one place to look was as good as another. "I dunno," he said.

"Naturally. . . . Now let's twit on facts. You're fresh out of relatives, and plumb, jam alone in the world. And you've killed a sheriff. You're an undesirable character, especially in Rainbow. If we were to auction you off this afternoon, you'd go cheap—with few bidders at the price. . . . Now, what's to do?"

Angus attempted no reply.

"You're ten years old."

"Goin' on 'leven," said Angus, showing his first spark of interest.

"Going on eleven," conceded Dave. "That's a bit early in life to go it alone. Can you read and write?"

"I kin read some, but I can't write nor figger."

"Better than I hoped for. . . . Like to learn? Like to go to school?"

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"I dunno."

"Come to think," mused Dave, "I don't calc'-late school would be eager to have you come to it. . . . Now you listen and see how much of this you can get through your head. As you stand, nobody's got a claim on you. Nobody can stop your doing what you want to—if you do it quick enough. You can clear out and be an immature tramp if you hanker for it, or you can stay with me, and Browning and I will see you have a bed and three square meals. But you don't have to stay. . . . Understand?"

Angus nodded.

"As a parent," said Dave, "I'm a little shy of experience. But I guess I can do darn near as well as the last ones you had. If you want to learn, I'll teach you. You can work down in the shop as much as is good for you, and we'll see if that and shufflin' around with humans won't make your wheels go 'round some faster."

Angus continued to hold his eyes steadily on Wilkins's face. The expression seemed to Dave a trifle less vacant, and he tried to make himself believe that Angus was endeavoring to consider the situation. After a sufficient wait Wilkins stretched out a long, bony hand, and laid it gently on the boy's arm. "Well," he asked, "will you stay with me?" Somehow Dave seemed to

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be asking a favor, rather than bestowing a notable charity.

Angus nodded affirmatively. . . . That was all.

"In that case," said Dave, "we'll have to doll you up. You've got to be a credit to a dressy man like me. . . . And another thing: you might smile once in a while. Know what a smile is? Understand, I'm not asking you to laugh out loud nor to see a joke. Just kind of grin now and then to get your face used to it. We'll work up to the laugh by slow stages."

Wilkins never had outfitted a boy, but he began the enterprise with enthusiasm and determination. From straw hat to stubby shoes he proceeded in leisurely manner and with appropriate comment, and ended by setting Angus in the barber's chair. He surveyed the result with satisfaction. . . . Rainbow had surveyed the pair of them with astonishment. . . . It gratified and somehow encouraged Wilkins to note how Angus strove to see his reflection in the windows of stores as they passed; that he found difficulty in keeping his eyes off his new shoes; that he crooked his arm stiffly before him to peer at the fabric of his coat. In short, Wilkins was delighted that Angus showed signs of interest and boyish vanity. It was not much, but it was something.

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"Well," said Dave, "you're fixed up considerable now. Got anything to say?"

Angus raised his eyes with a trace of question in them. Clearly he failed to understand. Probably Angus Burke never had uttered or thought the words *thank you*.

"Be they mine?" he asked presently.

"They're yours."

"To keep?"

"To keep."

"Dad won't take 'em and sell 'em?"

"No."

"Kin I wear 'em every day?"

"You've *got* to wear them every day."

Angus breathed heavily—a sigh of mingled relief and satisfaction. As Wilkins said to Browning that night, "If he'd had a tail he'd have wagged it." . . . This moment marked an epoch in Angus Burke's life; it marked the dawning of a first affection for a fellow creature—an affection purchased as the affection of a savage might be purchased by a string of beads—but none the less a species of attachment. . . . For the first time in his life Angus felt stirring in his sluggish heart a quickened thing, unborn, which might develop into that emotion which men call love.

Fully equipped, and to the eye a new being, Angus started home with Wilkins. Both were

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silent, Wilkins studying the problem of the boy, Angus in dumb admiration of his finery. As they passed Ramsay's drug store a boy and girl came out boisterously, almost colliding with them. The little girl spoke to Wilkins; the boy stared curiously and with hostility at Angus—who stared openly and unconsciously at the girl. She threw back her head and wrinkled her nose. As Dave and Angus went on they heard her say to her companion: "That boy hasn't any manners. He don't know *anything*. He don't know enough to tip his hat to a lady."

Dave looked down at Angus quizzically. The boy was red with embarrassment.

"You mustn't mind her," said Dave. "She's spoiled, Lydia Canfield is. Lives with her grandparents. . . . The kid's the son of your friend Crane. I don't cotton to him more'n I do to his dad."

At the next corner they met Mary Trueman, the pastor's daughter, and paused, for Mary and Dave were friends of standing.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Wilkins," she said, and glanced down at Angus with a smile and a nod. "I'm so glad the trial turned out as it did, aren't you? I was so sorry for that poor little fellow. Where is he? What's to become of him?"

"Allow me," said Dave, "to present Mr. Angus Burke."

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Mary looked again at Angus, this time with eyes wide with astonishment. "Oh," she cried, "this nice-looking boy! Impossible. He never hurt a flea. I won't believe it."

"He killed a sheriff," said Dave, and watched her face intently.

"Poor little fellow. Poor little fellow. . . . I want so to help—to help be good to him. What can I do, Mr. Wilkins?" Then to Angus, before Dave could reply, "I like your eyes and I like your cheeks, and you have a nice mouth. I want you to be friends with me. Will you?"

Angus shook his head in the slow, uncertain fashion which was habitual to him. "I dunno," he said.

"I wonder—you know I have a class of boys in Sunday school, Mr. Wilkins. Would he like to come?"

Dave smiled dryly. "I don't calc'late he's had much experience in Sunday schools. . . . But how about the daddies and mothers of the ones you've got, eh? Think they'd be tickled to death to see a small goat herded with their lambs? Better inquire around a bit and settle that point first."

"I shall do nothing of the sort. If other boys don't want to sit in class with this little fellow they can stay away; and if fathers and mothers are afraid he'll hurt their darlings, why let them

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keep them at home. . . . I want you to promise to send him Sunday."

"Be an interesting experiment in Christian charity," said Wilkins. "I'll send him."

So it was that Angus Burke, bathed, scrubbed, and arrayed in his best, went to Alvin Trueman's church on the following Sabbath—conducted to the door by Dave Wilkins. As they entered, Malcolm Crane, superintendent of the Sunday school, had the song book open and was turning his face slowly from right to left, so that its benevolent smile—the vacuous, condescending smile which some adults believe has charms for children—could be plainly seen by all. Crane's version of the benevolent smile verged a trifle on the oily; certainly it was smug. His eyes were opened to their widest capacity, as though he were surprised at his own genial bearing, and his mouth was bent in a curve which made one think of the cat that ate the canary. It was his custom to rise to his toes squeakily, then to subside again with a billowy motion which was very attractive indeed to the small boys who, under Mary Trueman's supervision, flourished in the pews directly under the superintendent's eyes.

Dave Wilkins paused in the door long enough to locate Mary Trueman, and then, with perfect calm, walked down the aisle, followed by Angus, and stopped at the end of the pew where she sat.

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"Here he is, Miss Trueman," he said. "Better give me a receipt for him." With that he turned and walked with elaborate nonchalance out of the church.

Mary made room for Angus beside her. Crane, whose genial smile had slipped from his face at Angus's entrance, recovered himself, and went on with the announcement he was making, but his smile was gone for that day. The school arose to sing, but few eyes were on the books. Whispers flew from child to child, from teacher to teacher, from class to class. The place of worship rustled; a tenseness of waiting fell upon it. Angus had been recognized at once.

Mary saw how her boys had drawn away from Angus, crowding themselves as far as possible to the other end of the pew, whence they gazed at her and at Angus with that vacancy of expression which, in the active boy, conceals thought and portends action. Angus noticed the commotion and the drawing away, for he pressed closer to Mary and looked up into her face uneasily. She smiled and circled his shoulders with her arm.

"I'm glad you came, Angus," she said. "You didn't forget."

"No," he said, glancing at the boys quickly, apprehensively, and then back to her face.

"You feel a little strange at first," she said.

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"But you must remember that everybody is glad to have you here. You're going to enjoy Sunday school."

He shook his head slowly.

"What? You won't enjoy coming?"

"It ain't that. . . . I dunno." He looked again at the boys and cast a glance at a little girl who was standing on tiptoe to peer over the back of a seat at him. "They," he said, pointing, "don't want me here."

"Of course they want you. I'll introduce you and then it will be all right." She motioned to the boys. "Come closer. This is Angus Burke, and he's going to be in our class. Shake hands with him, and we'll get acquainted before the lesson begins."

They hung back with faces which became stubborn.

She singled out a fresh-faced boy. "Harold Cuyler, won't you come and shake hands with Angus?"

Harold drew down his lip sullenly and put his hand behind him. "No," he said stubbornly. "I don't want nothin' to do with him. He's a murderer."

"Shame!" Mary's voice was sharp. "He's not a murderer. He's just a little boy like yourselves, only he hasn't had the good things and the good times you've had. He's been very unfortunate

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and unhappy, but that's all over now. He's going to have a fresh start and grow up to be a good man. . . . I'm ashamed of all of you."

"Is he going to be in our class?" Harold demanded.

"Yes."

"Then I ain't. I ain't goin' to be in any Sunday school with a murderer. My grandfather said I wasn't to play with him or have anythin' to do with him."

"Then your grandfather ought to be ashamed of himself," said Mary, with more heat than diplomacy. She turned, conscious that someone was behind her and saw Malcolm Crane standing in the aisle. He pointed to Angus and his face was forbidding.

"Do you—er—think this exactly—wise?" he asked coldly.

"Why not?"

"Why—ah—it seems hardly proper to have this boy—fresh from jail—mingling with these others."

"Nonsense," said Mary with acerbity.

"He's ignorant and dirty. Think of his squalid family. It's not right to bring him here where he can taint these other little fellows who come from Christian homes."

"You can see for yourself that he's clean," said

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Mary, "and as for the rest—isn't he just the sort our Sunday school ought to reach?"

"There is a proper way of doing it—not by bringing him here. I object to having my son sit in class with him, and so will other parents."

"You are perfectly at liberty, Mr. Crane, to take your son away."

He lacked the courage to stand by his prejudice to that point. Mary waited, but he did not reply.

"I have asked Angus Burke to come into my class," she said. "It is right that he should come, and I shall do all I can to see that he stays. . . . I don't think much of the Christianity of folks who would deny the Church to the unfortunate."

Crane turned on his heel and strode to his place in front of the pulpit. Encouraged by his example, Mary's boys arose in revolt.

"I ain't goin' to stay," said Harold Cuyler. "Not with him."

"Nor me—nor me," cried others, and they began to scramble out of the seat.

"If you go," said Mary, "you can't come back. I sha'n't be your teacher again. Remember that."

They scuffled off silently, leaving Mary alone with Angus and her own brother Jimmy. She arose and took Angus by the hand. "Come on,"

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she said chokingly, "I guess they don't want us here. Come on, Jimmy."

"I won't," Jimmy muttered. "I won't go walkin' out beside *him*."

Mary passed down the aisle holding Angus's frightened hand, and out of the church. As she stepped through the door a hubbub broke out behind her which could not be curbed. . . . It is doubtful if that day's lesson was of profit either to pupils or to teachers. . . . It was a lesson which burned deep into Angus Burke's soul, and perhaps was not without its benefit to him. Malcolm Crane alone felt that there had been something of success in it.

CHAPTER SIX

AT the far end of the printing office, Jake Schwartz, printer of the old school—which, even in the early eighties was already on the decline—was engaged in the unpleasantly odorous occupation of moulding rollers for the antiquated press on which the *Weekly Observer* was printed. Jake was inky, gluey, savage of temper, and a perpetual atomizer giving off the fumes of strong drink. . . . But he knew his trade, and his loyalty to Dave Wilkins was of the sort which hits first and never stops to inquire at all.

Nearer to the front, where the light was stronger, a boy who looked to be some fifteen years old faced a case, distributing type. He, too, was inky and grubby and unkempt to a degree which bespoke genius for that art. It was a matter of pride with him—and he was painstaking in his efforts. This person was none other than the office *devil*, who was known by the name of Bishwhang. This title had been bestowed by Dave Wilkins as euphonious and

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descriptive. It was a word which gave pleasure to the speaker, and Dave liked that sort of word. What other name or names Bishwhang might once have possessed have been lost in the mists of history.

This pair constituted Wilkins's staff—with the almost negligible exception of Nellie Ramsay, who did little, and that incompetently, in the office. That is to say, they had constituted the entire force until that very morning when another hand had been put on—when, at precisely eight o'clock Dave Wilkins led Angus Burke to Jake Schwartz and told that disreputable individual "to teach him as much as his basket would hold."

Jake blinked at Angus, rolled the delectable quid in his mouth, scratched his head, and asked huskily, "Kid that shot Bates?"

Wilkins nodded.

"Goin' to learn the trade?"

"If he can."

"He kin," declared Jake, narrowing his eyes. "Anybody kin learn anythin', pervidin' the teacher hain't got too much patience—and I hain't."

"He needs a heap of teaching," Dave said, more to himself than to Jake. "He's five years behindhand, and he's got to catch up. . . . He's got to be stirred, Jake."

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"I'll stir him."

"Don't go knocking him around. He's lost his appetite for it. Once Angus gets to going and he'll *whiz*. He hasn't all that head bulging behind his ears for nothing."

Jake turned morosely to Angus. "What kin you do?" he demanded sharply.

The boy looked first at Jake, and then to Wilkins for support. "I kin split wood," he said.

"There hain't what you might call a openin' for a woodchopper in this print shop. . . . Kin you make a broom do its duty?"

Angus shook his head. A broom was an implement of cleanliness and with such he had known small experience.

"Broom and sprinklin' can is back in the corner, and some sawdust in a bag. Git 'em."

When Angus returned, Jake directed the spreading of the sawdust and the wetting of it with the sprinkling can.

"Now," said Dave, "see how clean you can sweep it, Angus. I'll come down after a little to see what sort of a job you make of it."

Dave returned in half an hour to fulfill his promise of inspection, but stopped to speak with Jake about some handbills which should be ready for delivery. Several minutes were consumed in discussing this detail. While the conversation progressed, Angus, who had lingered in the rear

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of the room, commenced to edge forward. There was a slight alteration in his usual carriage, a faint lightening of his phlegmatic expression—a change which denoted anxiety. As he made his slow progress down the room he scrutinized the floor, stopping every few steps to look searchingly in some corner or cranny. Neither Wilkins nor Jake noticed the boy when he stopped close behind them, his fingers plucking nervously at the seams of his trousers. . . . He moved from one foot to the other and edged nearer and nearer in his impatience. At last, unable to endure further delay, he reached out and touched Wilkins timidly on the arm. Dave turned to look down inquiringly.

“I swep’ it,” Angus exclaimed breathlessly. “I swep’ it all.”

Wilkins understood. The boy had felt the stirring of responsibility and he had worked for a reward—a reward which was nothing more costly than a word of praise from Dave Wilkins. Angus had swept the floor to please *him*, and for *him* had done his best. It was loyalty. . . . Dave pretended to inspect the floor minutely, and when he had finished he faced the boy seriously. He did not make the mistake of smiling, or of dismissing the job as negligible, for he saw how important, how essential to the boy’s development it was that this faint dawn of ambition,

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this desire to accomplish, this first real effort of Angus's life should be recognized, and its results nurtured and trained and encouraged. To the suppressed mind of the boy the cleaning of the floor had been a project of great weightiness; he had given to it his best. . . . Now he waited with anxiety for the verdict.

"Angus," said Dave, "I don't call to mind a cleaner, better swept floor. I declare, I'm proud of you."

Angus drew a deep breath and his eyes gleamed. For an instant he stood vivified, a fleeting picture of what he might become. Then the curtain dropped and nothing remained but such a look of dumb gratitude and affection as made Wilkins turn away abruptly. . . . Angus drew another audible breath, gulped, and stammered, "Ain't there nothin' else I kin do?"

Wilkins was distinctly pleased. Angus had known his first taste of praise and was hungry for more. . . . How does the most careful definition of ambition differ from this? From that moment Dave had no doubts—Angus Burke could be reclaimed.

"There are lots of things you can do," he said, "and if you do them all as well as you did this—I shall be satisfied with you."

In this way began Angus Burke's apprenticeship—auspiciously. During the days which

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followed he was kept busy a reasonable number of hours with tasks which had little to do with the trade itself, sweeping the shop, washing pans and forms, folding papers. . . . It is usual for an apprentice in a printing shop to run errands and to distribute papers on printing day, but this did not fall to Angus—for Angus never went unaccompanied on the streets after the first day when Jake sent him to the drug store for turpentine. He arrived safely at Ramsay's, made his purchase, and started back. . . . It was then he was discovered by a group of boys of his own age, some of whom, unluckily, were members of Mary Trueman's Sunday school class. Sammy Hammond was there and Harold Cuyler. At sight of Angus they raised the war cry of boyhood and came charging toward him with ferocious demonstrations.

Your boy of nine or ten is essentially a hunting animal; from daylight until dark he searches for his prey, which may be anything from the alley cat to a stranger with a peg leg. Especially does the strange, the unaccustomed, the bizarre attract his gifted attentions. Whatever is marked by peculiarity draws his attention and his enthusiasm. Let a red-haired traveling man alight from the train and walk up Main Street—and if he be a stranger and the hour is propitious, he will be followed by half a dozen urchins

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bawling "Brick-top!" Let a mendicant with a peg leg make his appearance in town, and he will be harried by shouts of "Limpt," and more than likely by showers of vegetables. . . . What is not indigenous to their soil must be enemy. It is a throwback, perhaps, to the day when any stranger was a foe.

But in this descent upon Angus Burke there was more than this—there was imitation, and even encouragement. Last Sunday had taught them the stand they should take; the conversation in their homes had instructed them in how they should behave toward Angus, and last, but by no means negligibly, was Malcolm Crane, the public prosecutor of the county. Crane was a man who could hold a grudge against a child. The acquittal of Angus, he felt, had dimmed his reputation, and he hated Angus. His bitterness, loosed in words, found ready lodgment in his son's ears, and young Malcolm, planning as boys will plan with his compeers, had laid out a campaign, "to git the murderer." "I'll git you," is a part of boyhood's ritual. "I'll git you after school. . . . I'll git you when your pa ain't around. . . ." So Malcolm, Junior, in conference with his fellows, had instructed them in their duty, which was to "git" Angus Burke. . . .

It might be suspected that, boy-like, they would

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erect Angus into a hero. Not so. If he had been one of themselves, if he had been Harold Cuyler or Pазzy Brooks or any lad with whom they had been brought up, played with at recess, and known daily, a hero he might have become, endowed with a dread and terrible greatness. But Angus was an *uitlander*, an enemy in the nature of things, and therefore to be dealt with as an enemy. . . . It was a game, a make-believe—but to Angus it was no game. . . .

“We got you,” they shouted, bearing down upon him. “We said we’d git you, and we got you.” So runs the time-honored formula.

Angus was terrified. His knowledge of boyhood was trifling. How could he be aware that these beings of his own age were harmless—were engaged in a game which came naturally to them, the game of harrying a living creature? He backed away from their onslaught until he found himself checked by a store front and could retreat no farther. . . . On all sides he saw young faces alight with the lust of the hunt. . . .

“We got you. . . . We got you . . .” they shouted, and Angus faced them as he would have faced a pack of wolves, not aware that they would have taken to their heels at the first hostile movement on the part of so illustrious a criminal as himself. To him they were as ominous as a

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masked mob bearing a noosed rope—but he faced them, in terror, it is true, but he faced them.

Sammy Hammond added a cry to the clamor which achieved immediate popularity. "Murderer! Murderer!" he shouted.

That name sent a chill inward to Angus's heart, a chill which was the forerunner of panic.

"Jailbird! Jailbird!" young Cuyler contributed. "Chase him out of town." That was it, chase him. Your boy loves to see any creature scamper before his pursuit in terror.

Angus's face went wild, his eyes distended, his mouth opened so that his teeth gleamed through, and, head down, he charged the line of his tormentors. His was the unreasoning fury of deadly fear. He kicked, he screamed, he struck out with fists and butted with his head. In an instant there was a seething, scrambling, rolling *mêlée*, a bedlam of shouts and cries of sudden pain. . . . Then Angus, crying with fear, worked himself free of the mass and took to his heels in a wild scurry for the refuge of Dave Wilkins's office.

This was Angus's last appearance on the streets of Rainbow unprotected. The attack put Dave Wilkins in a savage humor and impelled Craig Browning to bring with him to Wilkins's rooms a set of worn boxing gloves and other apparatus for the betterment of Angus's physical

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self and for the development of skill in self-defense. . . .

The story of the attack was told and retold throughout Rainbow. It was magnified to sinister proportions, lifted to an epic in which Angus, gone berserk, had viciously attacked a dozen boys going peaceably about their business. . . . He was dangerous, the possessor of a homicidal mania. Something must be done, Rainbow declared. Were their children to be endangered every time they walked the streets? . . . It is of such stuff that reputation is made; from such fabric that public opinion is formulated. . . .

It was a week later that Angus, with Bishwhang for bodyguard, was trudging along through the more aristocratic portion of Rainbow. Their destination was a spot far up the river where wintergreen was reputed to grow in abundance. On the brow of the hill above them, maple-shaded, with green expanse of well-kept lawn, stood the Canfield residence. It was neither new nor ostentatious, but substantial, dignified, a typical Michigan small-town dwelling of the best class. Here lived Jethro Canfield, nearing the age of retirement, more than comfortably well-off, with sufficient lands and goods and stocks to insure an opulent old age with bounty left over for expectant heirs. With him

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lived his wife, tall, spare, with lovely white hair crowning distinguished features—a woman of whom, at first glance, one said, “She comes of good family.” Indeed she did come of good family, for, if Jethro could boast of his father, General Canfield, she could point to her Uncle Wilworth, sometime ambassador to Spain!

In Rainbow, to be intimate with the Canfields was a mark of social position, for, though Jethro was approachable, even to sitting with the loafers in front of the post office, his wife was not. She was always the same, kindly, dignified, turning a cold shoulder upon anything or anybody tainted with the vulgar or whose antecedents would not bear scrutiny. She hardly concealed a fierce pride in her blood and lineage. With her family was a passion and a religion—and this religion she inculcated daily in her granddaughter Lydia.

Angus and Bishwhang climbed the hill and were passing the Canfield house—adding to their pleasure by dragging a stick along the pickets of the fence. . . . Inside the fence, close by the house, they saw a boy and girl—the same children Angus had met at the drug store on the day when Wilkins bought his new clothes.

“There’s Mal Crane,” whispered Bishwhang. “His pa’s prosecutin’ attorney.”

Angus increased his pace, for young Crane had been conspicuous among his tormentors,

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always ready with shouts of "Murderer!" and "Jailbird!"—words which always threw the boy into panic. Now he was all for flight, but he was too late. Young Crane spied him and leaped to his feet, grasping Lydia Canfield by the arm and pointing gleefully. "There he is," he cried. "Murderer! . . . Jailbird! . . ."

Lydia shook his hand from her arm with petulant gesture and then peered curiously at Angus, whose white, quivering face she could see above the fence. . . . Mal Crane picked up a stick and shied it at Angus, who stopped, dodged, and held a protecting arm over his eyes.

No sooner had the stick clattered harmlessly against the fence than young Crane staggered under a stinging slap on his cheek. In sudden rage, most unladylike and unaristocratic rage, Lydia flew at him like a wild creature, slapping and kicking and gouging with all her dainty might, crying out as she struck, "You sha'n't do it. You sha'n't call him names. . . . Not in my yard. You sha'n't, you sha'n't, you sha'n't! . . ."

Crane let go a cry of surprised pain and turned tail in quick retreat, but the little fury followed, spatting him with eager palms until she chased him quite out of her yard. Then, flushed and lovely with a fairy-like beauty, she hurried back, calling as soon as her labored breathing would

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permit. "Boy . . . Boy . . . Stop. I want to talk to you."

Angus stopped. He wanted to run, but somehow he was fascinated. It seemed incredible to him that this mite of daintiness could have conducted herself as he had seen her do. He was more afraid of her than ever he had been of a mob of boys, but something in him would not allow him to run. He stood, head hanging, cheeks blazing, and waited in his tracks.

"I—I won't let him pick on you, not when he's in *my* yard," Lydia panted as she came to the fence. "I won't let anybody pick on anybody. It's my yard and folks got to do in it what I want, 'cause it's my grandfather's prop'ty, so there. . . . My grandma, she says folks hadn't ought to put up with bein' put on by other folks, that's what she says, and my grandma *knows*! When Mal Crane went pickin' on you, why didn't you fight him yourself?"

Angus let his head fall farther forward, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and kicked the walk with his toe. Lydia did not wait for an answer, but, peering sharply between the pickets, said, "I s'pose you're that boy that's so wicked, like everybody says, and shot Mr. Bates and lived in a shanty out there—and you're a tramp and your papa was a bad man and stole things, and your fam'ly was shif'less and didn't amount to

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anythin'. Are you him?" She recited the whole ritual carefully, leaving out none of the allegations which she had heard in her grandmother's discussions of the tragedy. She was rather showing off and parading her intimate knowledge of his life and character.

Angus, in travail of spirit, uttered no sound, but Bishwhang, feeling that information should be forthcoming, bobbed his scrubby head and said solemnly, "This is him, Miss."

"Well, I don't care a bit who you are, nor how shif'less a lot all your ancestors was," she spoke the word "ancestors" proudly because of the size of it, "nobody's goin' to pick on you in *my* yard." Her eyes flashed and she looked at Angus scornfully, but curiously. "Now you better tell me why you didn't just up and go for Mal Crane yourself."

"He hain't very smart," explained Bishwhang with another bob of his head, "but he knows more'n he uster. . . . I'm teaching him," he finished proudly.

There was a constrained silence for a moment and then Lydia turned toward the house. "My grandma says little girls like me mustn't ever speak to and not play with or anything little boys like you, she says. . . ." Then, with acumen which would have been startling to her elders could they have overheard it, "'Tain't

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'cause you shot Mr. Bates, I guess, but mostly on account of you not amountin' to anythin' and not havin' any fam'ly or blood or ancestors, like my grandpa and grandma's got—and my ancestors was a general and my great uncle was a ambassador. . . ." She paused and considered the matter. "Mos' likely if your pa had been a governor or somebody like that, why, your bein' put in jail wouldn't have been so bad. . . . But like things are and all, why, little girls like me can't have nothin' to do with you and mustn't play with you." She walked daintily away, but before she passed out of sight she turned and fired her parting shot. "Anyhow, and it don't matter how shif'less you are, you don't need to let nobody pick on you. . . . You can stand up for yourself like my grandma says everybody's got a right to. . . ." She shook her finger at him emphatically. "You just *got* to stand up for yourself."

Angus did not move from his position after she was gone, but stood staring fixedly at his feet, forgetful of Bishwhang, remembering only Lydia Canfield's words—words which had set to expanding some unused spring in his mental mechanism. They affected him deeply, compellingly, though he grasped them at first only dimly. He conned the words over and over, and each time some intuition informed him that she

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had uttered a thing of grave importance to him, something he must comprehend fully, and, having comprehended, must act upon.

"Come on," said Bishwhang, "we got nigh two mile to go."

"I hain't goin' to-day," Angus said abstractedly, and with no other word, he turned and trudged slowly down the hill and up the stairs to his little room above Dave Wilkins's printing shop.

It is a portentous moment in the life of any individual when first he knows the necessity to be alone and to think. It was doubly portentous in the life of Angus Burke. . . . To stand up for himself! . . . Also he was compelled to think about that other matter—that Lydia was forbidden to speak to him. That had to be studied out as well. . . . Vaguely, not with clear vision, he began to perceive the existence of social strata; class consciousness had its dawn within him. . . .

For a long time, laboriously, he mulled over these matters, and arrived at two conclusions, both of far-reaching importance. First, that he must stand up for himself, and second, that there should come a time when none would forbid their children to play with him. . . .

CHAPTER SEVEN

IDEAS flit into and out of the normal young mind like bees buzzing about a hive; each may contribute its trifle of honey, though it is highly probable a notable percentage are drones. In any event the coming of a single idea is no hive-bursting occasion. The arrival of an idea in Angus Burke's mind was comparable to a freshet in a mountain brook. While the flood continues the brook has neither time nor inclination for anything else. The freshet becomes an obsession with the brook. So Angus Burke's first adventure in thought possessed him utterly as the spring flood possesses the banks between which it rushes. . . . To stand up for himself! . . .

On the morning which followed Angus crossed the street to the post office for Dave Wilkins. It was but a step and he crossed hastily, timorously. Midway he caught sight of young Malcolm Crane and Lydia Canfield emerging from the door with letters in their hand—Lydia's a letter from a distant father from whom she

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heard on rare occasions, but whom she had not seen since babyhood—a shadow of a father becoming material to her only as inked words upon paper. . . . Angus halted, hesitated, turned, but the sight and thought of Lydia stiffened him to resolution while her words repeated themselves in his ear. “Stand up for yourself! . . . Why don’t you stand up for yourself?” So Angus persisted on his way doggedly.

Young Crane’s mischief-seeking eyes were quick to see him, quick to light with the hunting gleam of boyhood. He cast sidewise a calculating glance at Lydia, and for safety’s sake edged a few steps away. Then, jeeringly, tauntingly, he shouted, “Murderer! . . . Jailbird! . . .”

Angus walked steadily ahead. One might have reasoned that he did not hear. His cheeks were a trifle pale, but there was about his mouth an expression which in maturity might become fine determination. Close to young Crane he stopped, eyes bright, face almost animated by the working of the great idea within, and he spoke—not loudly, not excitedly with trembling voice, but rather doggedly, phlegmatically; he spoke as one who has taken a task in hand which he does not understand save in the aspect that it must be done.

“I got to stand up for myself,” he said. “You

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can't call me that name. . . . Don't pick on me. I got to stand up for myself."

Crane either failed to estimate Angus truly, or depended upon outside interference in his behalf, for he grimaced horribly and laughed provocatively. "Who's afraid of *you*?" he said, using the ancient formula of boyhood. "I guess I can call you whatever I want to, you bet. I can call it to you now, and what'll you do about it? . . . Murderer! Ya-aa-aa!"

Angus acted deliberately, with no glint of passion in his eyes. He stepped one pace nearer his tormentor and slapped his cheek with a sharp, clean, disconcerting snap. "I got to stand up for myself," he said in monotonous repetition.

Crane emitted a bellow of rage and struck wildly at Angus. . . . The fight was on, without the usual formality of a chip on the shoulder which is a part of the international law of Rainbow's boydom. Pride compelled Crane; resolution, firmly fixed, made it impossible for Angus to retreat; indeed the idea of retreat did not come to him. He was standing up for himself in the primitive way in which alone he could vision standing up for himself. One swift glance he cast at Lydia Canfield, and she bobbed her head excitedly and threw a little smile to him.

It was nothing but a boys' fight, a battle of ten-year-olds, of wild blows which found no

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mark, or which at worst could but blacken eye or blood the nose. Of such a fight the one notable thing to be observed is if courage shows its face or cowardice is forced to confession—yet it was a battle important in the career of one of the combatants as Marengo was important in the history of Bonaparte, for it marked in letters of red the turning point in Angus Burke's life, his moment of emergence from the torpor which had lain like a frog concealing the Angus Burke who should have been.

Angus fought as he had challenged, phlegmatically, determinedly, one might almost say stolidly as a man goes about the uncongenial task of shingling a roof—and he won. Young Crane, presently, the worse by bruises and an eye which would have its story to tell, was crying the tears of the defeated.

A hand rested upon Angus Burke's shoulder, and Alvin Trueman, who had emerged from the post office in time to be a spectator of the complete episode, turned the boy about firmly. "That's enough," said Trueman kindly. "Now shake hands and be friends."

Angus stood without movement, uncertain, unequipped to meet this demand. Deep within him he felt dimly that it was not for him to take the initiative. Young Crane glared through his tears, muttered sullenly under his breath, and

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pushed his ashamed way through the little knot of spectators who had gathered from nowhere to watch the scrimmage. Angus stood uncertain; then, when Trueman's hand dropped from his shoulder, he turned away from it all as from a bit of work completed, and started on his way to the post office. Lydia Canfield's voice stopped him, an excited, musical chirrup. "You did stand up for yourself," she said, and seemed to take a special pride in the thing as of her own doing. "If you hadn't been in jail, and if it wasn't for other things that, like anybody knows, make you kind of low down and beneath anybody's notice and so you're not fit to play with, why, I guess maybe I'd like you." With which pronouncement, she skipped off light-heartedly, womanlike unaware or careless of the trouble she had caused.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HENRY G. WOODHOUSE stood alone at the apex of Rainbow's social pyramid. Not even Jethro Canfield occupied such a position in the estimation of the village. He was a gentleman possessed of broad culture and of personality—and when one added his remarkable distinction of appearance and very considerable wealth, it is not to be wondered at that little men regarded him with awe and were humble in his presence. Good men are by no means so rare as we, seeing with the eye of modern cynicism, are accustomed to declare, and Henry G. Woodhouse was a good man. It was the boast, not of Henry G. himself, but of Rainbow, that no man could point to him and say, "He has wronged me."

His dignity and reserve made it difficult for most folks to approach him—qualities which had been more pronounced during the past dozen years since the finger of grief and disgrace had touched and hurt him sorely. First, his only daughter Kate, a beauty, willful, overindulged,

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had eloped with a man whom Rainbow knew not, an *uitlander*, reputed to belong to the flashy, wit-living class, a frequenter and follower of horse races. Secondly, in her going Kate had not hesitated to take without leave certain valuables and money. This was the sorest wound—for it touched the matter of honesty. . . . She disappeared, and from the day of her going to the present moment, Henry G. had not set eyes upon her. Only vague rumors came back to him—unpleasant rumors of a career of questionable adventure. . . . The thing had killed his wife and left him alone—and alone he remained, a man withdrawn into his own fastnesses, living with his servants and omitting the hospitalities of other days.

His interests were large, reaching far beyond Rainbow. He owned the local bank and was a lender of money upon mortgage of whom none spoke envious word of evil.

Small pebbles thrown from a remote shore may send out ripples which agitate sands far distant from the spot from which it was picked. . . . Malcolm Crane had, for years, been local advisor to Henry G. Woodhouse in legal matters, but latterly, more through a kindly interest in the young man than from any more selfish motive, Henry G. had thrown certain small matters to the newcomer, Craig Browning—until, being

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pleased with the young man and his work, his patronage increased until he stood almost on an even footing with the older lawyer. It was a pebble whose widening ripples were destined to trouble the sands of Angus Burke.

Lawyer Crane, as Rainbow called him, as it named other men according to their callings—such as Depot Seaman and Druggist Toms, and the like—considered this encroachment upon his practice a sufficient ground for bitterness against Craig Browning; but as a bond of friendship grew up between the young attorney and the banker, Crane fanned his jealousy with apprehension, for he had reason to look forward to the death of Henry G. Woodhouse as a source of enrichment to himself. Was he not cousin to Mrs. Henry G. Woodhouse, deceased? Was he not sole relative by blood or marriage remaining, since the not-to-be-doubted death of Kate Woodhouse? . . . Waiting for dead men's shoes is an occupation which pinches the soul. . . .

In the week succeeding Angus Burke's memorable thrashing of young Crane, Browning was summoned to the bank for conference. The matter being completed and the papers signed, Henry G. leaned back in his chair and looked speculatively at the young man, mechanically

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rubbing the shaven avenue between his side-whiskers as he spoke.

"How is Dave Wilkins making out with that boy?" he asked.

"Angus is moving ahead—stepping up toward the mental average. When you think what he was when Dave took hold of him, his progress has been startling."

"Is he difficult to control?"

Browning's surprise at this was manifest on his face. "It's the other way around," he said. "It's pathetic—the doglike way he follows Wilkins around, and the delight he shows when Dave makes a request of him. He worships Dave."

"He has vicious outbreaks of temper." Mr. Woodhouse stated this as an accepted fact.

"Mr. Woodhouse, you have been misinformed. I don't believe the boy has a temper. Any such thing seems to have been destroyed in him. He was completely cowed, numbed when he came to us. The shock of that night——"

"Yes, yes. . . . But twice he has attacked other boys—once a whole group, and the other day he beat young Malcolm Crane unmercifully."

It was apparent to Browning who Henry G.'s informant had been. Indeed, it was a matter of common knowledge that Crane had gone up and down in public places threatening dire things against Angus, and Wilkins had been alarmed

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lest the man's vindictiveness should take the form of some drastic action within the scope of his authority as prosecuting attorney.

"Let me give you a version of those fights that differs from those you have heard," said Browning, and convincingly he related the story of the day Angus was beset by the crowd of boys yelling "Murderer," and "Jailbird," and of Angus's terror which all but kept him a prisoner in the printing office save when he went on the streets accompanied. "As for this last affair—it marks the greatest step ahead that Angus has made. It marks the awakening in the boy of an understanding that he owes a duty to himself—that there is such an abstraction as self-respect. Young Crane has been, from the beginning, a leader of the young rascals who have tormented Angus. It was as if he carried some special animus. . . ." Browning paused to let this sink in. He could not, or felt he could not, make a direct charge against his rival. "Always before Angus has run terrified, but this time he stood, just walked up to Crane and kept repeating as if it were a lesson, 'I've got to stand up for myself. I've got to stand up for myself.' He wasn't angry—no loss of temper—just grave and very resolute. . . . It seemed a rather fine thing to me."

There was a long silence, broken by Mr.

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Woodhouse, who sighed and said, "So that was the way of it? . . . So that was it? . . ."

Craig nodded.

"He doesn't go to school?"

"We tried to send him. Public opinion won't allow it. There was a tremendous stir."

"You've been teaching him?"

"Dave and I—and Mary Trueman."

"How has he progressed?"

"For a time it was slow; his brain seemed stiff, rusted from lack of use—but even in the beginning a thing once mastered never had to be told him again. Now, while he must plod and sweat, he acquires more readily than many normal boys. And he's tenacious. Once he starts after a problem he has no idea of how to give up. That, I should say, was almost his salient characteristic—that he doesn't know how to quit."

"He ought to go to school."

"It's impossible to send him here. You have no idea how the town feels toward him. . . . I've seen it in the case of grown men and women, but never before have I seen a community in concentrated effort to drive out a child."

Henry G. nodded understandingly. "I know. I know the folks. . . . Wouldn't it be a good idea to send him away to some school where

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nobody would know his story—not even his instructors?”

“It might be the saving of him—but Dave and I can’t afford it. I wish we could.”

“If you and Wilkins think it best—if Wilkins is willing to let him go—I’ll undertake the expense. Talk it over and let me know.”

It was a matter to ponder over and Wilkins discussed it with Browning until little of the night remained.

“It’ll be—queer—without the kid,” Wilkins said, moving his feet uneasily. “He’s been a darned interesting experiment. . . . But it’s the thing to do. To-morrow we’ll thrash it out with him. Don’t believe he’ll cotton to it.”

“It will be separating him from his god,” said Craig. “But he’ll go. If you ask him he’ll go if it breaks his heart—to please you. . . . By the way, you know you’ve no legal right to his custody.”

“I’ll adopt him.”

“You’ll do nothing of the sort. He’s got a father at large who may kick up a fuss some day. You’ll be appointed his guardian. I’ll fix up the papers to-morrow.”

When Browning was gone Dave took off his shoes and tiptoed to Angus’s door. He opened it and stood looking at the boy, dimly revealed to him by the moonlight—stood for a long time.

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. . . Angus was not the only one to whom the separation would come with pain. . . .

Next morning Browning came, and together he and Wilkins went downstairs to the shop to interview Angus—neither exuberant at the prospect. Angus saw Dave the instant he stepped into the room, and his face lighted, became transmuted by a smile.

"Come over here, Angus," said Dave.

Sensitive to Wilkins's moods, Angus caught the underchord of trouble in his voice, and looked apprehensively up into Dave's eyes.

"Angus, would you like to go to school?" Dave's question sounded abrupt, curt.

"School. . . . I dunno. . . ."

"School—where you can be better taught than we can teach you. . . ."

Angus was at a loss. Not comprehending what lay behind the matter, he kept silence.

"Tell him, Browning," Dave said savagely.

"You know Mr. Woodhouse, Angus. He has offered to do something Dave and I think will be the best thing that could happen to you. He has offered to pay your expenses at a boarding school, where nobody will know you—know about what has happened—and nobody will torment you, and everybody will treat you like—just like any other boy. Would you like that?"

Sudden apprehension fell upon Angus—a pre-

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monition. He looked with dumb questioning eyes into Dave's face.

"It's not so far away—and we—Dave—could come to see you sometimes. . . ."

"Away? . . . Away from *him*?" The boy's face paled, lengthened, his lips parted.

"The school is down in Ohio—not a long ways off."

"Would *he* come, too?" Angus was looking at Dave now.

"No, Angus, Dave couldn't go with you—to stay. But he would come often to see you."

"Often," said Dave in a harsh whisper.

Angus continued to look at him, not accusingly but with a depth of woe in his eyes, reflected from a sorely wounded heart. His friend wanted to be rid of him. . . . It was the same old thing—to be moved on and on, and again on. He clenched his fists and his lip stiffened to prevent its quivering. Dave, suffering himself, read what was passing in the boy's mind and drew Angus toward him, bent his thin, angular form until his face was on a level with Angus's face, until his eyes could look into Angus's eyes. His arm was about Angus's shoulders in the first caress the boy could remember.

"It's not that, Angus—never. I want you to stay." He shook the boy in his eagerness to impress understanding. "You're my boy. I

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want you here. I—I'm sending you away because—because—Hell's Bells!—because I've *got to*."

Angus's eyes continued to devour Dave's face, as though they sought to pierce to the innermost recesses of his heart. Dave met gaze with honest gaze. "It's true, Angus," he said.

Then Angus smiled. He believed. His friend, his hero, his god did not want to cast him off, but for some mysterious reason must send him away. It gave his friend pain to part with him. . . . He lifted an ink-stained hand and touched Wilkins's arm timidly. It was a returned caress—a queer, suppressed, clumsy effort to comfort. . . . Dave coughed savagely.

"He sha'n't go unless he wants to," he said.

Browning was suddenly inspired. "Angus, you said the other day that you were going to stand up for yourself. Do you really want to stand up for yourself?"

"I got to."

"Then you must go, Angus. That will be standing up for yourself—doing the biggest thing you can do to stand up for yourself."

Angus looked to Dave for confirmation.

"Yes," said Dave, "Yes. . . ."

The boy made no comment, because he could think of nothing to say.

"You think it over, Angus. . . . It's for you

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to decide," Dave said. "It's for you to do as you want to."

Angus paused, shook his head. "I got to stand up for myself," he said, as if that closed the matter. "I got to go."

CHAPTER NINE

BISHWHANG and Jake Schwartz had overheard the conversation and now, embarrassed, big with clumsy sympathy, they approached Angus. Bishwhang spoke anxiously, for the answer to his question meant much to him.

"Be—be you goin' away, Angus?"

"I—I guess so."

"What fur?"

"To learn."

"Jest to learn?"

Angus nodded.

"That hain't no reason," expostulated Bishwhang.

"Mr. Wilkins said so," Angus replied, as one who invoked deity.

"'Tain't no reason, is it, Jake?"

"Wa-al, now, Bishwhang, I hain't prepared offhand to give no final opinion; there might be reason for it, and there might not. I hain't one to say learnin' hain't got no value."

"Why can't Angus git learnin' here?"

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"You know 's well as I do," said Jake, resorting to his warlike tones. "It's 'cause these here hymn-singin', prayer-lettin' folks in Rainbow won't let him. 'Cause the kids pick on him."

Bishwhang bristled. "They better not when I'm around."

"It 'ud fix things so Angus was better able to stick up for himself in the world," said Jake, reasoning the matter out.

"Jake," Angus's voice was anxious. "Will this school learn me that? Will they learn me to—stick up for myself?"

"I calc'late so."

"I got to stand up for myself, ain't I?"

"Bet your life."

Here was corroboration. It appeared that to go away would really be standing up for himself—but there was still some doubt. The matter of self-respect and of taking his own part in the matter of life was not exactly clear to him—and he felt he must know for certain. He turned it over and over in his mind until he saw a way out—a way to determine finally: he would go to his original source of knowledge, to a sure authority on the abstruse subject—to the person who first set the idea to moving in his brain. He would ask her. Abruptly he turned, and, hatless, left the shop. Bishwhang and Jake watched him in astonishment.

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"What's got into him?" wondered the older man.

"Angus is goin' away. . . . He's goin' away from *us*. What's a-goin' to become of us now?" Tears stood in Bishwhang's pale eyes.

"I'm a-goin' to find what he's up to now," said Jake, as he thrust on a disreputable hat and started for the door. "I'm goin' to foller him. No tellin' what he's took into his head."

Angus plodded across the bridge and up the hill. Jake Schwartz followed unseen.

"She'll know," Angus said over and over again as his eyes sought the Canfield residence, scanning its porches and yard for the spot of animated color which would denote Lydia's presence. "If she hain't outdoors I'll set—*sit*—down and wait."

Presently, from the rear of the house Lydia went dancing across the lawn and out of the gate, a tiny basket over her arm, and skipped off briskly toward the fields and wood which lay beyond. Angus got up slowly and followed doggedly, moving fast enough to keep her in view. For perhaps a mile he plodded on behind; then, where the road ran between wheatfield and woodlot, Lydia threw herself down on the grass to rest. Propping her face on her hand she reclined, her face away from Angus.

He accelerated his step and stood awkwardly,

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bashfully, but determinedly by her side, his heart thumping, his cheeks flushed, his fingers plucking nervously at the seams of his trousers. He was afraid to speak, so he waited until she should turn and see him. . . . Presently she sensed a presence and moved her head with a little, startled jerk.

"Oh," she breathed in relief, "it's you."

He nodded.

"What for did you come here? Where 're you going?"

"Now'eres. . . . I come—to see—you."

"I told you," she said severely, "that I wasn't allowed to play with you, or have anythin' to do with you—on account of because you've been in jail and——"

"I didn't come to play with you." There was a hint of dignity in his reply. "I come to find out."

"To find out what?"

"About standin' up for myself—like you said."

"Oh!" She waited for him to go on. He stood swaying from foot to foot in confusion, striving to put his thoughts into speech. It was she who uttered the first word.

"You *did* stand up for yourself. . . . I liked it. Don't you like it—better than always running away?"

"Yes," he said, and then, "but maybe anyhow

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I'd of run away if you hadn't been there." Here, unconsciously, he stated one of the great ingredients of heroic action—that man is more afraid of being seen to run away than he is to face his danger. Fear of ridicule has made many a man a hero.

"You won't ever run again," she said with conviction.

"Is other things besides not runnin' standin' up for yourself?"

She considered carefully. "Yes," she said after a moment, "I guess lots of different things."

"Is goin' away to school?"

It required a minute for her to make up her mind. Then she nodded. "Yes. It isn't standin' up for yourself to be ig'orant. Folks that's ig'orant is just as bad as runnin' away."

He sighed.

"But if it was goin' *away*—if it was leavin' *him*?"

Lydia had been much with adults; perhaps some of her perceptions were in advance of her years. "They want you should go away to school?" she asked.

"Uh-huh."

"Why don't you go to school here?"

He hesitated, blushed. "It's—like playin' with

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you," he said. "Folks don't calc'late to let me. Nobody'll let me."

She flushed angrily, quick to rise in defense of the oppressed. Lydia Canfield possessed a fiery sense of justice. "Then they ought to be 'shamed of theirselves. Playin' with and goin' to school is diff'runt things. You haven't got a *right* to play with me, but you got a *right* to go to school."

"But I dassent," he said simply.

She said nothing. He waited and presently asked again, "Be you certain-sure goin' away to school is standin' up for myself?"

"Yes," she said, "I'm certain-sure of it."

He sighed and his shoulders drooped. "Then," he said wearily, "I'll have to tell *him* I'll go."

As he spoke a man, bearded, haggard, vicious of face, slouched out of the woods and stood leering down at the children. He was a squalid figure, one to shrink from with disgust. He cackled with jeering laughter.

"There you be, hey?" he said in a tone he meant to be humorous. "Wa-al *now*. Who'd ever thought I'd find you handy way out here! How be ye, Angy? Hain't ye glad to see your ol' pa that's took sich resks jest to come after ye?"

Angus stood as though turned to stone, his

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eyes staring, his voice paralyzed in his throat. Titus Burke cackled again. "I heard you was bein' took care of," he said fawningly, "so I waited a spell till things quieted down 'fore comin' after you. . . . Then I got sort of lonesome, and besides I got a use for you, so I come to git you."

Angus gave back a step, but his father strode forward and clutched his arm roughly. "None of that, young feller. . . . So you hain't glad to see your pa, eh? I'll make ye glad to see him when I git time, see if I don't. Gittin' proud, eh? I'll proud ye, I will." He grinned evilly. "Come on," he ordered.

"I ain't comin'," Angus panted, struggling to break free. "I'm a-goin' back to *him*. . . . I hain't a-comin' with you."

"You hain't, hain't you? We'll see after that, young feller. . . . Now you come a-hustlin'." He shifted his grip from Angus's arm to his collar and began to propel the boy across the road and into the woods. Lydia screamed.

"Shet up," barked Titus.

"I sha'n't," she snapped, and screamed again.

Titus Burke glowered at her venomously, half turned, but thought better of it, and commenced to drag Angus away—but around a turn of the road thirty feet away came panting Jake Schwartz. He bawled to Titus to let go of that

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there kid. . . . Angus, hope twinkling in his heart, dragged back. His father cuffed him and cursed. Jake bore down upon him vengefully, wrenched Angus free, and with a savage blow sent Titus Burke headlong into the ditch.

"What's this here? What's a-goin' on here?" Jake demanded as he stood over the man.

"He's my kid," whined Titus, "and I got a right to my own flesh and blood."

Jake was startled. He turned to Angus. "Is this here critter your pa?"

Angus nodded, still trembling with terror.

"Now ain't that hell!" said Jake with conviction. He scrutinized Burke, who was now scrambling to his feet. "So you're Titus Burke, eh?" He leaned closer to make a more careful examination. "Titus Burke. . . . Titus Burke. . . . Maybe so, but that name kind of don't fit into my mind as belongin' to your face." He scratched his head and rumbled in his throat. "I don't forgit faces, pardner, and I hain't seen youn' these ten-fifteen year. . . . Back in Springfield, that's where it was, and your name wasn't Burke, not by a darn sight. . . . Now what was it that set you in my mem'ry?"

Jake drew Angus behind him and his manner changed. "Now you git—whatever your name is," he said in a businesslike way. "Git and git quick; and if ever I ketch you botherin' this kid

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agin, I'm a-goin' to take these two hands and yank you to pieces. . . . Git!"

Titus Burke slunk into the woods, swearing.

"Come along, Angus," Jake said, with something in his raucous voice which might have passed for gentleness. "Nothin's goin' to hurt ye now."

Lydia Canfield followed them silently. At her grandfather's gate they halted briefly. She regarded Angus with cold eyes, with a haughtiness which seemed to proclaim that she was drawing back from the defilement of his touch even the skirts of her thoughts.

"Was—was *that* your really, truly father?" she asked.

"Yes."

With deliberation she turned her back upon him and went into the yard. Her manner was elaborate and eloquent. No words could have so expressed to Angus her disdain, or the fact that she was definitely and forever withdrawing from any contact with him or with his problems. . . . He stared after her piteously. In a moment he said under his breath, "I got to go away to school. . . . I got to go 'way."

Another reflection was occupying Jake Schwartz. "Now what in blazes," he said, "was the name that fellow used when I knowed him in Springfield?"

CHAPTER TEN

DAVE WILKINS caught the gleam of the sun on the spire of the church across the river, and his dry smile had in it a touch of bitterness. It was the men who had reared that spire, pointing like the needle of a compass to heaven, who were depriving him of his boy—the boy he had grown to love. . . . It was he, an agnostic, doomed by those spire-builders to eternal damnation, who was concerning himself with the soul of that lad—a soul which he could not bring himself to believe was immortal. He saw the irony of it, that he, who could not accept Christianity, was compelled to the practice of it in its concrete form.

“If,” he said to himself, “there is a God, he must be amused.”

He rested his hand on Angus Burke’s shoulder, and at his touch the boy looked up into his eyes with a sudden brightening of his face that made Dave wince.

“Why,” he reflected, “must grief so often be the consequence of doing the right thing?”

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He drew Angus to him with an unaccustomed display of affection. "Is it decided?" he asked.

"Have you thought it over: About the school?"

"I got to go. I got to stick up for myself."

"Where did you learn that, Angus?"

"She told me I got to."

"Who told you? Miss Trueman?"

"No," said Angus, nor could questions elicit the name of the mysterious She who had sown this seed in his mind. Lydia Canfield was shut away in some reserved, secret fastness of the boy's heart, hidden from all the world—even from Dave Wilkins. . . . It was a curious thing, a curious reticence emerging from the fineness of his submerged character.

In that moment apathy seemed to settle over Angus, nor did it lift during the few weeks which remained of his stay in Rainbow. No doubt the sudden, terrifying appearance of his father undid much of the good work his friends had accomplished. The threat it expressed hung over him, appalled him. He seemed duller, less interested in events, more phlegmatic. Dave he followed like a dog, regarding every instance of his presence as precious. He was afraid to be alone, fearful of going upon the street unaccompanied. His father's face haunted him so that at night he cried out in the terror of his dreams—and then Dave Wilkins sat long hours by his

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bed, holding his hand to reassure him of his safety.

"He won't find me at this here school," Angus said again and again, and Wilkins took all possible precautions to avert such a catastrophe. Angus's going or his destination were matters entrusted to the knowledge of a trusted few.

It was early September when Lafe Fitch's 'bus carried Wilkins and Angus to the depot. They had stopped in the shop to say good-by to Bishwhang and Jake Schwartz, but both were gone, not to be found. Browning had come with Mary Trueman—and she had kissed Angus and cried over him and whispered words in his ear which returned to comfort him many times during the years which followed.

Joylessly the pair clambered aboard the 'bus, and rattled and clattered down the street, across the iron span of the bridge, where loafers stood snaring bony fish out of the current with loops of copper wire—and thence along the dusty road, past the fair ground and the oil tanks, to the depot a half mile from town. Dave alighted first, then Angus.

In the waiting room were Bishwhang and Jake Schwartz, perspiring not from heat but from embarrassment. Their farewells were spoken gruffly, jerkily, in monosyllables.

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"Jake and me," stammered Bishwhang, "we come to see you off—didn't we, Jake?"

Schwartz growled and shuffled his feet. He seemed extraordinarily ill-tempered. Angus's face grew a trifle more blank than usual. Wilkins's jaw set and he paced to and fro with short, uneasy, indecisive strides. There fell an awkward silence, the silence of human beings striving to express what was in their hearts—something which uncouth, masculine inhibitions kept imprisoned.

Bishwhang stammered again, "Jake and me—we kinder calc'lated we'd come to see you off."

"This here kid and me——" blustered Jake, but words failed him; he thrust his hands viciously into his pockets and glared provocatively at the inoffensive ticket seller through his little window.

"It looks kinder—like a nice day fur—fur travelin'," Bishwhang said, forcing out the words as if he were being strangled.

In desperation Jake plunged an inky hand into his hip pocket and extracted a much be-fingered, thumb-marked packet. The knots would not yield to his clumsy touch, and he jerked off strings and wrapper violently.

"Bishwhang—*him*——" He pointed out the printer's devil as if Bishwhang were a strange individual, never seen before by Angus. "Him

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and me we kind of figgered . . . seein' as how you was goin' to be some'eres else—quite a spell . . . Gol darn it! Here, take the damn thing, and maybe—with this here a-layin' in your pocket—you'll kind of rec'lect the's sich folks as Bishwhang and me—back here in this consarned town. . . .”

Mechanically Angus accepted the pasteboard box, scarcely comprehending that it was a gift, a farewell gift. He made no movement to examine it. . . . Bishwhang gulped, waggled his arms excitedly, waiting for Angus to take off the cover. This presentation was the great achievement of Bishwhang's life, the one glowing thing which, from the dull years which lay before him, he could look back upon with a feeling that he had once lived, acted, participated. Still Angus remained motionless.

“It's yourn,” urged Bishwhang. “Open her up, can't ye? Me'n Jake—we got it fur ye.”

Angus removed the cover and saw within a silver watch of enormous proportions, near to an inch in thickness, open-faced, with a tick so loud it could be heard distinctly even when hidden away in a pocket. Bishwhang and Jake waited breathlessly for him to speak. Angus regarded the watch, stared at Jake and Bishwhang stonily, expressionlessly, and then happened a thing to remember. From his eye there welled a tear

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that topped his lid, lingered, then rolled slowly down his cheek.

"For me. . . . For me . . ." he said slowly. Then he sat down abruptly on the edge of the platform, his face bleak, lifeless, while silent tears followed each other in strange procession down his cheeks. . . .

Presently the train roared in; they boarded it as people might board a funeral train, and from its platform, at Dave's direction, Angus waved a lifeless hand at the friends he was leaving behind—and so he disappeared from their view.

Until the train was hidden by a distant curve, Bishwhang and Jake stood staring stonily after it; when the rear platform of the last car passed from view, Bishwhang heaved a deep sigh and moved closer to Jake as if for companionship. . . .

. . . Thus Angus Burke departed from Rainbow, Godsped by a printer's devil and a whiskey-smelling printer. When he returned, not even these were there to bid him welcome.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

IT was noon next day when Angus Burke and Dave Wilkins arrived at their destination—the mid-Ohio village of Emporia. During their waking hours there had been little conversation between them—but it seemed to Dave Wilkins that the boy's eyes never left his face.

"Angus," he said, as they drew near the town, "this is going to be just as if you were born all over again; do you understand? As if you were somebody else. You're going to be on an equal footing with other boys and have an equal chance. . . . I want you to forget all about Rainbow."

It was a moment before Angus replied, "I—don't want to fergit. . . . I want to remember *you*."

"Yes, Angus," Dave said, "you are to remember me."

The boy showed no curiosity when they alighted. He did not look about him as the ordinary boy would have done upon entering a new town; rather, he pressed closer to Dave's side, and kept his eyes on the walk as they pro-

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ceeded. His manner was that of one who dreads to be seen.

"It's not a private school you're going to," Dave said. "It's a regular public school. . . . It seemed best to try that kind. Because I want you to be like other boys. . . . I want you to know and to play with them, Angus—I hope you'll find some boy to be your chum."

"Chum?" Angus asked, and pondered over it. "Was Bishwhang a chum?"

"Why—I suppose he was."

Angus nodded, but there was a peculiar expression on his face. Dave understood it to be a promise he would try. He also understood it to mean that Angus would have nobody else occupy the place Bishwhang had held.

Presently they stopped at a small, white, gardened house which was to be Angus's home for years to come. A stout, white-haired woman opened the door.

"Careful of the cat. Wouldn't have him stepped on fer a dozen new-laid eggs. This is Mr. Wilkins, ain't it? And this is the boy. Come right in. Soon's I heard the train whistle I fixed a snack, knowin' what boys' appetites is." All this before Wilkins had a chance to say good morning.

"Angus," he said, "this is Mrs. Bassett. You're going to live with her."

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"And we're goin' to git on splendid—hain't had no boys around for forty year—goin' to be almos' like havin' the grandson I never got. I woke up las' night, Mr. Wilkins, would you believe it, out of a dream where me'n your boy got on so well together he come to call me Grandma—right this way—front room—snack's waitin' for you."

Angus watched her curiously, then looked at Dave's face to read what Dave thought of the situation. Dave seemed gratified.

When they were in Angus's room with the door closed, the boy stood in the middle of the room looking straight before him. He was thinking, and Dave waited.

"She *wants* me here," said Angus. It was a miracle, a condition never before experienced by him.

"Yes, Angus. Everybody will want you here. Some day everybody will want you everywhere."

"No," said Angus, the old fear dulling his eyes, "they—wouldn't never want me—not in Rainbow."

Mrs. Bassett bustled and mothered over Angus, not a little to his bewildered embarrassment. "Hain't much of a talker, be you? Kind of strange yit. Wear off. You'n me's goin' to take a sight of comfort together. How you figger you're goin' to like it?"

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"I—I'd like it if *he* was goin' to be here."

"I s'pose he'll be startin' right in to school. Um. . . . The's good boys here, but mischievous. Just you lemme tell you, Angus, the startin' makes a heap sight of diff'rence. Don't you go lettin' nobody bully you. Show right at the start you kin look out fer yourself and stand up for yourself without fear or favor. . . ."

There it was again, the exhortation to stand up for himself. Angus looked quickly at Dave, who nodded. Mrs. Bassett already was going on:

"I call to mind how my boy come a-runnin' home once with another boy a-chasin' him. Bigger boy. 'Henry,' I called out to him from the gate, 'you stop where you be. Don't come runnin' in here. You stop stock-still and give that boy a lickin'—or I calc'late to give *you* one myself when you git in.' Well, Henry he sailed in pell-mell and I stood by till the job was done. . . . Lesson he couldn't 'a' learned in school."

"I've got to stick up for myself," said Angus. . . .

That was the auspicious beginning of that phase of Angus Burke's life which lay in the village of Emporia, of that period of education, of development, of adventures in human nature, in which he discovered that people were not

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necessarily enemies, and that there existed a wonderful occupation by the name of play.

School was an experience for Angus—when his first fear wore off and experience proved to him that nobody knew who or what he was. Strange boys made advances to him. The teacher was kind. She watched him with experienced eye and called him to her desk.

"You're lonesome," she said.

For a moment Angus made no reply. Then he said, "*He* had to go back." That explained everything.

"He? Who?"

"Mr. Wilkins."

"Who is Mr. Wilkins?"

Angus pondered this a moment. He didn't know exactly who Mr. Wilkins *was*—except that—he fumbled for a reply.

"There ain't anybody but Mr. Wilkins," he said.

"And he left you here alone?"

Angus comprehended a veiled criticism and resented it. There came a flash in his eyes, an alertness upon his face which quite transfigured him.

"He *had* to," said Angus.

The teacher's curiosity was stirred. Yet, looking at Angus, she knew it would be useless to question him. Her experience with boys had

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been wide, yet here was one whom she could not comprehend, and who interested her. . . . It was not strange. Who could comprehend Angus but one who knew his story?

"Angus," she said presently, "I'm hired to teach you reading and writing and arithmetic and geography—but I want to teach you, and all my boys and girls, more than that, if I can. I want to teach them how to live, and how to get the best out of life. You, Angus, are here alone. Maybe you will want somebody to talk to—about things. Maybe you will have troubles, or puzzles. . . . I hope you will let me help you. Remember, I want to be your friend."

It was all confusing, startling. Instead of antagonism, cold avoidance, open jeers, terrifying hostility, he was meeting on every hand, even from the pupils, welcome and companionship. He did not know what to do with these commodities. It was a new condition of life to which it would be difficult to adapt himself. He was embarrassed.

"Will you remember?" the teacher said.

"Yes," said Angus.

"Now run along and play. You'll find the boys about yet. They'll be glad to play with you."

Glad to play with him! It was a condition he had never imagined. Play! He, Angus Burke,

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to play with boys. Never had he imagined such a state of affairs to be possible—simply it had never occurred to him. . . .

As he passed down the school walk he saw half a dozen lads sitting under a tree. His impulse was to make a wide detour, avoiding them as if they were wild beasts and dangerous—but he restrained it, walked straight ahead.

"Hello," called a boy.

Angus paused, uncertain what to do or say.

"Goin' to live here?"

"Yes."

"Whereabouts? I hain't seen any fam'ly movin' in."

"He's livin' with Mis' Bassett. Ma told me," a second boy volunteered.

"Where'd you come from?"

"Michigan."

"Good thing you come to Ohio. It's got Michigan beat forty ways."

Angus held no brief for his former place of abode, so remained silent.

"We're gittin' up a ball team. What d'you play?"

Angus shook his head.

"Don't you play *nothin'*? Not pitch or field or *nothin'*?"

"No."

"Why? Don't you like baseball?"

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"I—I'm goin' to learn. I *got* to."

The boy who had first spoken turned to his fellows. "We kin use him out in right field. He won't git many flies there."

This seemed satisfactory, and Angus was made a member of the team which, after much argument, was named the "White Wings," and the athletes sought a field to commence practice.

Then, for the first time in his life, Angus Burke played—played with other boys as an equal; was addressed by them familiarly, carelessly. He began dimly to understand the meaning of the word "play," and, unaccustomed as he was, phlegmatic as he was, he was lifted out of himself by the exhilaration of it. Perhaps he was not as noisy as the rest, for it was his nature to be silent. Clumsy he was and without skill, but he went at the thing doggedly, intensely. It was clear to everybody he was doing the best he could, "tryin' every minnit," as they said, and they were pleased with him. . . .

That night he wrote Dave Wilkins:

"I went to school. I was not afraid of anybody. Not of the teacher. Nobody called me anything. It is all right for me to be there. I played ball. I couldn't play good. The boys called me Feet because I fell down. I didn't care because they called me Feet. I liked it, kind of. I would like it here if you was here, and Jake and Bishwhang. Tell them I showed the watch. Nobody but me had a watch."

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Dave read the letter to Jake and Dishwhang, and showed it to Craig Browning. Jake swore profoundly and learnedly; Bishwhang grinned and wriggled. Craig Browning shook hands silently with Dave. . . .

The first six months of Angus' life in Emporia saw little change in him outwardly; but a great alteration inwardly. To recreate a human being is not the work of hours, but Angus was on the highway to a new identity. His movements were freer, less clumsy. He could smile. Fear had lifted from his shoulders—he was beginning to forget as only youth can forget—and that was the first great step in the process. His study was characterized by a dogged persistence; he learned slowly, demanding reasons. His was not a mind fitted for short cuts, and always he must take the slow, certain, laborious way—but when he arrived at his answer it was usually correct—and he could state his reason for every step in the process. . . . He was growing.

One friend he made deliberately, one individual he sought out, and that was the proprietor of the Emporia *Banner*, Peter Waite by name. One Saturday Peter looked up from his case, for Peter was of the old-time editorial brotherhood who composed and “stuck” his editorials at one and the same time, to see a boy leaning on the stone watching him hungrily.

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"Hello, Bub," said Peter. "What can I do for you?"

"Nothin'," said Angus.

"Um. . . Hain't got any of it. Anythin' else do as well?"

Angus could imagine no possible reply to this, so he remained silent, sniffing in the odors of the shop as if they were frangipanni or frankincense. Peter regarded him briefly from time to time. Angus did not move. Presently Peter addressed him again.

"You must want somethin'. Everybody does. What did you come here for, anyhow?"

"Because," said Angus simply, "I wanted to *be* here."

"Come of your own free will and accord?"

"Yes—sir."

"What made you *want* to come?"

"I—was walkin' by—and the door was open—and I——"

"You smelled printers' ink," shouted Peter, recognizing a brother in the craft.

"Yes," said Angus.

"Here," said Peter, holding out the printer's stick, "set while I dictate."

Jake had taught him the case, taught by thorough methods known to the old printer, and Angus took the stick eagerly. Peter dictated slowly while Angus' hand flew about the case

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nimbly, snatching the type, automatically feeling the notch, and clicking it into the stick. It was a labor of love. Peter Waite had vanished, and he was working for Dave! . . . When Peter was done and had struck a proof, he regarded Angus with interest.

"Whoever taught you knew his business. . . . Pa a printer?"

"No."

"Boy that boards with Mis' Bassett, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"Um. . . . Pretty lonesome for a sniff of it, wa'n't you?" asked Peter, waving his hand about the shop.

"Yes."

"Come whenever you please, and go whenever you please. Grab whatever you can handle. By Golly, I know the feelin' myself. Shake."

Peter was mistaken. It was not the smell of printer's ink that called to Angus, but the fact that Dave Wilkins loved that smell, lived in that smell, carried it about upon his garments. Angus came then, and daily afterward because the place was a constant reminder of Dave Wilkins, and—somehow—when Angus busied himself about the place, he was able to imagine he was working for Dave—preparing himself to work for Dave. . . . Six months before such

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a flight of imagination would have been impossible for him.

From that day forth Angus missed few Saturdays at the printing office, and on many other afternoons was there—especially Thursdays when the paper went to press. The ninth or tenth Saturday, Peter stopped Angus and offered him fifty cents. Angus took it in his palm, regarded it slowly and shook his head.

“No,” he said slowly, tendering back the coin, “I ain’t—workin’ for—you.”

“What’s that?” demanded Peter in astonishment.

“I’m workin’ for *him*,” said Angus.

“Who?” asked Peter, but Angus shook his head, nor could Peter induce him to utter Dave Wilkins’ name. The boy never uttered it, seemed to hold it in a sort of reverence as a thing not to be spoken in the ears of strangers and common men.

“By Golly, Bub. I’ll make a printer out of you. I’ll do more than that—I’ll make a newspaper man out of you,” promised Peter, and during the years which came, he was as good as his word. Painstakingly, lovingly, as a sculptor hewing his Moses from Parian marble, Peter Waite labored with Angus, teaching him not only the mechanics but the ethics of the business, instructing him in its ideals and higher functions,

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demanding that Angus equip himself as for a mission. "Bub," he said, "you've got to learn to be a prophet in Israel. You've got to learn not only how to stand up for yourself, but how to stand up for the rights, and fight down the wrongs of the whole community."

Here was an extension of Angus's creed—to stand up for himself. To that he now added the proposition of the necessity of standing up for the rights of others. Herein Peter Waite laid a foundation which, one day, was to bear a finished structure.

Under the tutelage and solicitude and friendship of three persons, Peter Waite, his teacher, and Mrs. Bassett, Angus grew inwardly and physically. But all the labor expended upon him was as nothing when set beside the miracle wrought by the lifting of fear, by companionship and friendship casually tendered, as though such things were his right, by the realization that, save on the little corner of Earth's surface occupied by Rainbow, he could stand on his merits, be received according to his deserts, and hope for any position to which his abilities entitled him. . . . Anywhere in the world—save that one black spot—Rainbow!

Rainbow impended over him always, overshadowed him, intimidated him. Ceaselessly, in remote recesses of his mind was a dread, a night-

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mare dread of a possible necessity of returning to Rainbow. . . . It was a foreboding. He felt he would be driven back—drawn back—for was not Dave Wilkins there?

Eight years passed. Angus was graduating from high school—a young man eighteen years of age—a young man vitally, miraculously different from the boy whom Dave Wilkins had taken from the courtroom to the little cubicle over his printing office—yet he was the same, basically the same. . . . The ten years which had culminated in that courtroom had left upon him indelible traces, traces which must descend with him into the grave.

It was spring. He was looking forward to his graduation as to an accomplishment, proud, because Dave would be proud—that Dave whom he had seen half a dozen times a year. He was almost happy.

Then a postman delivered a letter at Mrs. Bassett's door, a letter for Angus Burke in a handwriting he had never before seen. He opened it, read it to the signature at the end—and the signature was that of Lydia Canfield!

That night, secretly and without good-bys—lest kindness prevent his departure, he boarded a train for Rainbow. In his heart resided fear such as he had never known, and dread, dread of the town toward which his face was turned. . . .

CHAPTER TWELVE

EIGHT years mark vital changes in the individuals who make up the population of a community, but leave little effect upon the community itself. It was so with Rainbow. Arrivals, departures, graying hairs and maturities modified the entity which was Rainbow very little indeed. Eight years! Eight years had passed since the town, being what it was, had driven out Angus Burke, and, continuing to be what it was, Angus was all but forgotten save by the few whose lives were linked by chains of affection with his own.

Dave Wilkins was older, yet it was difficult for those who saw him daily to trace the imprint of the years upon his lean, often melancholy, ironic face. Craig Browning was older, more responsible, had, indeed, become the head of a family, and Mary Trueman, as was inevitable from the first, was his wife. Jethro Canfield was gone, and that severe, family-worshipping, splendid woman who had shared his years lay beside him in that acre of God which knows

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no distinctions nor castes. . . . And Lydia, perching in the glamorous doorway of womanhood, waited eagerly for what might befall. Alone she was, a member of Craig Browning's household, his ward under the last will and testament of Jethro, her grandfather. . . . Least changed of all with whom this narrative has to deal were Bishwhang and Jake Schwartz. . . .

Craig Browning was seated before his desk reading with concentration which befits a leading member of the bar, a lengthy legal document. Suddenly his ears were assailed by a clamor as of some creature, possessed of many times the usual allotment of arms and legs hurling itself up his stairs with slippings and stumblings and sprawlings. The door burst open and a young man with frightened eyes, with uncut, bristling hair, with inky face that worked with extraordinary emotion, plunged in, shouting:

"Mr. Browning! . . . Mr. Browning! . . . He's took! He's took!"

"Who's took, Bishwhang? And what's he took with?"

"Dave's took. . . . He's clean out of his head, and Jake's a-holdin' him. . . . He's a-goin' to die!"

Already, hatless, Craig was on his way to the

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door. "Come on," he snapped. "Tell me as we go."

Bishwhang came panting and sobbing, uttering incoherencies from which Browning gleaned, now and then, a sentence that was intelligible.

"He come into the shop and he says to me, 'Where is it, Bishwhang?' and I says, 'Where's what?' and he says, 'That bar of iron, that hot iron. I kin feel it a-proddin' into my head, but I can't find it,' says he, and then flops over and goes on talkin' and mutterin' and thrashin' around. 'Who done it?' says he. 'Tain't right puttin' a hot iron into a man's head.' Jake, he come a-runnin' and grabs him and holds him and yells for me to git a doctor and you. Out into the street I could hear Dave a-hollerin', 'Angus never done it. . . . He wouldn't 'a' done it to me.'"

Bishwhang's fright was pitiful; he fumbled his calloused hands and whimpered, "He's goin' to die. He's goin' to die, and what'll become of all of us then?"

"He's going to do nothing of the sort," Craig snapped, sharp in his anxiety. "Brace up. We're going to need you."

They turned in at the printing office, and through the partition Craig could hear Wilkins's voice droning querulously—now and again rising sharp and thin. "Take it off, can't you? What you want to go sticking hot type in my head

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for? Right there. Lines and lines of it. . . . You did it—and Angus didn't stop you. He wasn't there. He. . . ." Dave lay, propped against a stone, twisting and writhing and struggling in delirium, his head pillowed on the greasy overalls of Jake Schwartz. Doc Knipe knelt by his side striving to force a sedative between his lips—a fantastic figure of a physician in his customary warm weather costume of shirt-sleeves and a high silk hat. "Typhoid," he snapped. "Should 'a' been in bed a week ago, the dum fool. . . . Now he's in for it. . . . Here, you, hang onto him while I fix something to quiet him."

Doc Knipe prepared his hypodermic. "Jerk up his sleeve," he rasped. . . . "There, guess that'll keep him still a bit. Now what're we goin' to do with him? Can't lay here on the floor a couple months." The doctor's tone was, as always, belligerent. He seemed to take illness as a personal affront. "He's goin' to need nuss-in' and care, but where 'n tunket he's goin' to git it, I don't know. A man that hain't got gumption enough to git married ain't got any business to git sick." From choice, perhaps from policy, the doctor spoke the language of his people.

Craig thought of the little room upstairs, dark, uncomfortable, a poor place to be well in and a

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fatal place to be sick in. "Mary'd do it," he said to himself, and it was in no effort to persuade himself of the fact that he spoke, but with real belief and confidence. "Doc, can he ride in a carriage as far as my house?"

"Kin if he has to."

"Take him there, then. Mary would want me to send him."

"Mary's a fool," snapped the doctor. "This ain't mumps. It's typhoid—*typhoid*—and there's months ahead of him. Don't go bitin' off more'n you kin chew."

"Dave's got to be saved."

"Sure. . . . 'Tain't customary, though, to balance a man's life against ten weeks of discomfort for somebody else."

"Get a carriage, Bishwhang," directed Craig, and there the matter ended. Wilkins, burning with fever, twitching, tossing, muttering, was taken to Mary Browning, and Doc Knipe snorted when she said to Craig, "Of course you did right," and went about her arrangements for the sick man calmly, practically, without the least pretense of fuss or flurry or of doing an unusual thing.

"I'll nurse him," cried Lydia Canfield. "I'll nurse Uncle Dave."

"You," said Doc Knipe in his most intoler-

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ant manner, "will mind your business and do as you're told."

Lydia stood for a moment, her arms stiff and straight at her sides, her hands gripped so that the knuckles showed white, and glared at the doctor's unconscious back. She had a temper, that young woman, and something of an estimate of her importance in the world. She looked like a furious fairy. Then, quivering with the fury of outraged dignity, she rushed out of the room and down the stairs. On a chair in the hall rested the doctor's high silk hat—it personified him. To Lydia it was a part of him, to be hurt, humiliated, as he had humiliated her. The sight of it was a crooked finger on the trigger of her temper and she smote it with her palm so that it rolled and bounced across the floor. Vindictively she followed it and crushed it into shapelessness with her foot. . . .

Still at white heat she passed out of the house and marched up the street, cheeks blazing, chin aloft, and passed at intervals without recognizing them, no less than three intimate acquaintances.

Bishwhang and Jake Schwartz had been left standing on the sidewalk in front of the printing office, watching the carriage disappear. They remained as they stood until the sound of its wheels could no longer be heard. It was as though they were manikins from which the

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springs had been removed, and this was, in a measure true, for Dave Wilkins was the main-spring of each of them.

"He's a-goin' to die," Bishwhang said chokingly.

"Shet up. . . . Hain't goin' to nuther."

Then, moved by a common impulse, they followed in the wake of the carriage.

"He never knowed me," said Bishwhang. "He never even knowed who I was."

"He was out of his head," said Jake.

"Do folks die of it?"

"Folks die of anythin' they set their minds to."

They walked to the house where Dave lay, passed it, turned again like sentinels and continued to trudge to and fro, waiting, waiting.

"Mebby they'll need us," said Bishwhang, uttering their common thought, so they held themselves near and ready.

When Lydia emerged after her encounter with the doctor's hat they followed her eagerly, but she went too swiftly for them, and they resumed their pacing for upwards of an hour when Doctor Knipe, holding ruefully in his hands the remains of his headgear, emerged. Bishwhang and Jake waylaid him at the step of his carriage.

"Look at that," he snorted. "Snashed. . . . Good's new, too. Hain't owned it more'n twelve year. . . ." He seemed suddenly to

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realize that he was talking to someone, and, jerking back his head with an odd, intolerant gesture, he snapped out, "Well, what do *you* want?"

"How is he?" asked Bishwhang.

"Doggone sick. . . . Likely to be sicker."

"He—he's been poorly quite a spell."

The doctor glared at Bishwhang. "I should say he *had* been poorly. Some folks never call a doctor till there hain't work for anybody but an undertaker—and I ain't such dammed bad company, neither." With that he climbed into his buggy, snatched the reins from the crotch between whipsocket and dash and clucked to his horse.

"Hain't he got a chance, Doc?"

"Alive yit, hain't he? Anybody's got a chance till he's dead. . . . Who's goin' to git out the paper while he's laid up? You two?" Doctor Knipe emitted a crackling syllable of laughter so dry one would not have been surprised to see a cloud of dust arising from his throat. "G'dap!" He shook the reins over his horse's back and jogged away, bare-headed, coatless, a spectacle of professional dignity which would have shocked many another community—but, withal, the best loved, most implicitly trusted individual in that county.

Bishwhang and Jake resumed their sentry-go.

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"Who *is* goin' to git out the dum sheet?" Jake asked testily.

"I dunno," said Bishwhang.

"You'n me kin stick the type, but we can't write no stuff. Now who 'n hell——"

"It's got to be got out. There'll be doctor's bills and med'cine and sich—and Dave, he hain't got nothin' else."

"Huh," Jake snorted, "kin you imagine me settin' down to write up the Methodist ice cream festival? . . ."

"Here's that Canfield gal comin' back," said Bishwhang, and there was Lydia, the keen edge of her temper dulled by a long walk.

"Evenin'," said Jake. "We was waitin' for news about Dave."

"Why don't you go in and ask?"

"We—we didn't want to make no bother," Bishwhang stammered, "but—if you kin tell 'em—Jake and me—if we kin do anythin', or anythin'—we'd admire to be told."

"I'll go find out about him for you. Wait." She started through the gate."

"If you kin see him," Dishwhang said. "If you git a chance to talk to him, jest ask him what in tunket we're a-goin' to do. Tell him we're up a stump. Him bein' sick, there hain't nobody to git out the paper. . . . Kind of ask him what he'd do if he was in our place."

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"And," said Jake, "if 'tain't too much trouble, Miss, could you fix it so's Dave 'll know me—we was—doggone sorry."

Presently she returned with her report. "He's a little quieter, but oh, he's terribly sick! Mr. Browning said to tell you he—he'd tell Uncle Dave what you said—as soon as he could."

"Mr. Browning didn't suggest nothin' about the paper?"

Lydia shook her head.

"Did it happen he—Dave—was talkin' about Angus? He was when he got took. . . . Angus must 'a' changed, Jake, eh? In eight year he must 'a' growed, eh, Jake?"

Jake nodded sullenly. Lydia stiffened to attention. "The very thing," she said. "Write to Angus Burke and have him come home to run the paper. He ought to come. Don't he owe everything to Uncle Dave? . . . From his letters—Uncle Dave's read them to us—he's capable of it. That's what you ought to do." Lydia was immediately enthusiastic.

Jake shook his head. "Dave wouldn't like it. Angus hain't through school, and Dave didn't want him comin' back here—not to Rainbow. Had his reasons, Dave did, and 'tain't fer me'n Bishwhang to interfere."

"But I'd like to see him jest the same," muttered Bishwhang. It was a wish he had ex-

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pressed thousands of times during the stretch of years, years during which neither he nor Jake had seen the stolid, unfortunate pariah who had grown to be of such importance in their dull lives. Often they talked of him; always there had been messages for them in Angus's letters—showing that Angus remembered. But they could not imagine Angus to be almost a man—he was still the same to them—unaltered. . . .

"No, Miss," said Jake, "we can't do that."

It was not like Lydia to argue; not by argument did she carry her points, but rather by swift, surprising action. She turned on her heel and hurried up to her room. There she wrote a letter to Angus Burke, a letter which was the first he had ever received from a person of her sex.

"Angus Burke, Esq.," she wrote formally, "Dear Sir: Mr. Wilkins is very sick. It is typhoid fever, which is very dangerous and he is very delirious all the time. There is not anybody to do his work on the paper and I think it is your *duty*," she underscored "duty," "to come home, even if you aren't through school, and keep the paper going. Yours respectfully, Lydia Canfield."

She waited to consult nobody. Convinced she was right, she went ahead careless of consequences. Such was her way. . . .

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ON the fifth day of April Angus Burke arrived again in Rainbow, at first glance a young man, on closer scrutiny a boy to whom gravity gave a fictitious semblance of maturity. As he stepped from the train he turned his head first one way and then another, until his eyes, almost furtive, compassed the complete semicircle of his vision. He lifted his shoulders; seemed to draw himself together with a shudder, as one who encounters a chill draught. He was doing a thing which required courage of no mean order, a higher courage than that which carries men to the mouth of the cannon or into a darkness peopled with lurking enemies. An assault upon the body cannot compare in dreadfulness with an assault upon the soul.

What had he expected? He did not know. Instant recognition, raucous jeers, an instant of dreadfulness, perhaps. . . . He poised, tense, waiting for it, but it did not come. Nothing came. He arrived—that was all, arrived as any unheralded stranger might arrive. . . .

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Eight years had not effaced Rainbow from his mind; its terrors had not been dimmed, but rather increased to fabulous proportions; it remained distinct, clear in his recollection with a sort of savage glare. He could not think of Rainbow without the word "murderer" ringing in his ears; without a shrinking and cringing. Always he had known that, some day, he must come back to face it, to fight it—for Dave Wilkins. He knew his whole life was a preparation for that battle, that he was a soldier in training; that he was preparing for it as other boys prepare for a profession. Rainbow was his profession—to brave it, to battle with it, to slay with his life and his conduct and his achievements the old dragon of prison stigma; to erase the mark of Cain which had been stamped upon him. Dave had told him this; had talked of it often, pointing it out as a splendid thing to do. . . . But this had always been a matter for some moment in the dim future, and now, suddenly, without an hour to prepare his soul for the test, the thing was upon him. . . . And added to his dread of Rainbow was a terror, stark and numbing, lest Dave Wilkins whom he worshiped as a dog worships his master, might be taken from him by death. . . .

He paused, hesitant, upon the planked platform of the depot, worn and splintered by the

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iron wheels of baggage trucks; the station was the same dull red, unpainted since the day of its erection; the same telegraph instrument clicked in the bay window; the same air of lazy casualness persisted. At the end of the platform Lafe Fitch lay back on the high seat of his yellow omnibus, indifferent whether passengers came to be taken to the hotel or no. There was the same odor of oil and of cinders. . . . The same muddy road led past billboards and straggling houses toward the town, whose standpipe and church towers reached upward toward the same sky. It was Rainbow, the same Rainbow, unchanged by any miracle, and Angus hated it with a bitter hatred.

It gave him temporary comfort that he was not recognized, but recognition must come. It was a sort of reprieve which he took advantage of to hasten down the road, to avoid Main Street, and, by unfrequented ways, to reach Craig Browning's door; it opened and he stood face to face with Mary Browning. She held the door ajar, not recognizing him, waiting for him to state his errand.

"Mr. Wilkins . . ." he said. "Uncle Dave. . . ."

She stared at him amazed, searching his face, startled as recognition dawned in her eyes. He saw her face light with welcome, with astonished

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pleasure—then cloud with doubt as she stretched out her hand and drew him in.

“Angus,” she said, “Angus Burke—is it you?”

He nodded, lifting his eyes to her face, and she, reading what was in them, placed her hands on his shoulders, and, sorrowing for his sorrow, kissed him as a mother would have kissed.

“Angus,” she said. “It is Angus—this *man* is Angus Burke.”

“Is—is he——” he stammered, but could not finish his question.

“No,” said Mary, hastening to give the assurance he sought. “He is no worse—and no better. Doctor Knipe says he has—a chance. He—he’ll be glad to have you with him, Angus—when he can know you. He talks about you constantly in his delirium.”

He nodded; then said in a voice devoid of animation, “I had to come.”

“But how did you know? We were going to keep it from you.”

Angus did not reply to this, felt some intangible clutch upon his honor which forbade him to reply—or maybe it was a reluctance to mention Lydia Canfield’s name. He did not avoid or evade the question; he simply let it lie and die. There were no evasions in him, nor was he capable of diplomacy. He stood and gazed at the floor stolidly, as was characteristic of him in

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troubled moments and Mary Browning studying him wondered what changes had taken place in his intelligence—if he had progressed as Wilkins's enthusiasm had seen his progress, or if that brain which Dave had insisted was only dormant were really inert. It was impossible for her to determine.

"Were you happy at school?" she asked.

"No," he said, but made no explanation.

"Were you unhappy?" she asked after a moment of uncertainty.

Again he answered with a monosyllable, "No."

"Weren't they good to you? . . . Was it hard to learn?"

He ignored the first question, but replied to the second, "Studying was hard—in the beginning. But," his face seemed to set, to reflect the resolution which had carried him through, "but I learned."

"Were you lonesome?"

He looked at her with something of surprise and reproach, as if such a question were both absurd and without comprehension. "*He* was not there," said Angus.

Mary caught her breath and drew back as from some secret, wonderful recess into which she was forbidden to pry. "Didn't you like the boys? Wasn't there fun and games?"

"The boys," he said slowly, "were all right."

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Then he explained their rightness in so far as he was concerned. "They didn't know about me."

There it was in a sentence—the thing which had weighed him down, the thing which had robbed of joy that time of his life which should have been most joyous. Again Mary Browning caught her breath—and understood something of the boy, of his fight, of what had been required of him. But most clearly of all she understood what his return to Rainbow meant to him.

"Why, Angus," she said, "you—you were *afraid* to come back to Rainbow."

"I had to come," he said doggedly. "But I am afraid. . . . They—they will yell 'murderer' at me."

"No, no. Oh, Angus, all that was years and years ago. Everybody will have forgotten."

"No," he said with conviction.

"Why did you come back?"

"He was sick. . . . Somebody had to—run the paper. I *had* to come."

He had to come. Nature had given to Mary Browning a love for human beings and an understanding of human beings which helped her in this moment. She was able to understand that Angus's brief words were but an abbreviation, that they stood for something fine and big and of great promise. She was able to know that they gave the keynote of the boy's character

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—that, come what might, he would do the thing required of him, that there resided in him a glowing force which demanded of him the performance of what his mind and heart told him was the demand of duty. . . . From that instant she took him to her heart without reservation.

“But, Angus, aren’t you expecting too much of yourself? You’re only a boy. . . . Do you really think you can get out the paper?”

“I know I can,” he said simply. “There was a paper—down there. I used to—go to the office a lot. I—I pretended it was *his* paper and that I was with *him*.”

Mary had not looked for sentiment nor for poetry—it was unconscious sentiment and poetry she found, the sort which is not invented by the lips, but which derives, unbidden, from the heart. It was an illuminating flash.

He turned his face suddenly toward the door, arrested by footsteps on the porch. It was Doctor Knipe, who entered brusquely without rapping. He scowled at Angus and was hurrying past up the stairs when Mary halted him.

“Doctor,” she said, “this is Angus Burke, come back to us.”

“Angus Burke. Angus Burke. . . . Who in tunket is Angus Burke?”

“You must remember him—the boy Dave Wilkins——”

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"Yes, yes. To be sure. Kid that shot Bates." He glared over his spectacles at Angus. "Well, what in thunder did you come back for?"

"*He* needed me," said Angus.

The doctor eyed him sharply a moment, growled in his throat and made a most disagreeable face. "Huh," he snorted. "Rainbow'll make it pleasant for you. . . . Dummed pleasant! You'll wish you was in Jericho with the walls cavin' in before you're here a week—or I don't know this town."

"Doctor!" expostulated Mary.

"Rainbow's Rainbow," he said, glaring at her and snorting contemptuously. "Kills whatever it can't understand. Gawd help an angel that busted a wing and fell down on Main Street. If it wa'n't placarded 'Angel' in big letters, the town'd set onto it and kill it with brickbats."

"Can he see Mr. Wilkins?"

"Can if he wants to. . . . Come on."

Dave Wilkins lay quiescent, eyes closed, sunken cheeks hot with fever. Now and then the bedclothes stirred with a spasmodic twitching of his limbs. An odor of drugs and of superheated flesh oppressed the room. A nurse, imported, seated by the window, appeared indifferent. It seemed to Angus that nobody was doing anything. He felt a surge of resentment toward doctor and nurse. . . . Yet, he himself stood

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awkward, awed and frightened. He hoped Dave would open his eyes to recognize him. . . . Afraid, constrained, crowding down seething emotions, he stood motionless, unable even to whisper. Presently Doctor Knipe was through. He shut his case softly and motioned Angus to follow him. In silence they traversed the hall and descended the stairs, where the doctor stopped abruptly.

"Better git out of Rainbow," he said.

"I've come to stay," said Angus colorlessly.

"They'll make it hot for you."

"I'm going to stay," Angus said, and something in his tone drew a sharp glance from the physician.

"Rainbow's built on a rock foundation, and every rock's got carved onto it, 'We don't tolerate anythin' different.' You can't buck it."

"I've *got* to stay," said Angus.

"You're a blasted fool," snapped the doctor, "and don't come to me whinin'." With that he flung himself out of the house. Though Angus did not know it, he had already won a friend, and in his perverse way that friend had given him assurance of aid and comfort. It required long years of custom to know Doc Knipe.

Mary Browning gave Angus a little time to recover himself after the shock of seeing Dave

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Wilkins lying, pitiful, at death's door, then she entered the parlor.

"Perhaps you'd like to go to your room," she suggested. "Did you have your trunk sent here?"

"My room? . . . My room's at the office."

"But you can look after the paper and still stay here and be comfortable."

He shook his head; his plans were made and they were unalterable as Mary discovered when she sought to dissuade him. . . . She, and others, would come to know that with him a resolution once taken was set as though in solid masonry.

"You'll come for dinner?"

"No," he said. "Uncle Dave and I always ate at the hotel."

He fumbled with his hat uneasily, and Mary understood. "You want to go to the office," she said.

"Yes."

"Go, then, Angus, but remember, you are always welcome here. Come often. Come every day."

He nodded in a preoccupied manner and passed out of the house. On the walk outside he encountered a girl, passed her without looking, unconscious of her presence, indifferent that she merited better treatment from his eyes. . . .

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How would he recognize Lydia Canfield after all these years? But she, having seen him emerge from the house, jumped to her conclusion in her customary way. This must be Angus Burke. She turned to scrutinize him, to make the appearance of this young stranger coincide with her recollections of the old Angus Burke. Then she called after him.

"Angus, Angus Burke," she said.

He stopped, turned gravely, hiding his apprehension.

"Don't you remember me?" she said. "I am Lydia Canfield."

His eyes brightened for an instant. "Yes," he said. Then, after a pause, "I'm trying to stand up for myself—like you said."

"I'm glad you've come," she said primly. "It was what you ought to do." Then again, and with girlish pretensions of mature dignity, she scrutinized him. "You—you have improved," she said.

He flushed under her directness and moved his head uneasily. But his eyes did not waver from her face. It seemed as if he were scrutinizing her, searching for something which he hoped very much to find, but he did not reply. For once in her brief, active life words did not come readily to Lydia. Finally Angus looked away

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from her and she felt relieved. "I got to go to the office," he said.

"Yes. . . . Good-by. We—we're very glad to have you back again." It was very prim, very artificial, but Lydia, as usual, was acting a part. This time she was not succeeding overwell in her characterization.

Angus made a clumsy motion with the upper part of his body—a sort of automatic, involuntary bow, performed without consciousness. Then he turned his back squarely and abruptly and strode rapidly away.

He had not mentioned her letter, nor that she was the person who had called him back to Rainbow, nor did she. Somehow she did not want the letter mentioned, and he had a vague feeling that any mention of it ought to come from her. As she walked away she wondered why he had not spoken of it and asked herself if it could have been delicacy which held Angus silent, or merely stolidity. This was a question that many asked themselves concerning the conduct of Angus Burke in the days that were to come—and few were wise enough to discover the answer.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ANGUS paused inside the door of the composing room. It was unchanged: he could remember every article of furniture, every ray of light which penetrated through dim windows, the position of every article, even the size and shape of stains upon the wall. It was home, the one spot upon earth for which he had known affection. He hesitated, overcome by the flood of recollections which swelled up within him, recollections which had to do with shelter and kindness, with friendships and with loyalty. These things had been born into Angus Burke's life in this dingy room. . . . To him it seemed the fountain head of all virtues.

At a case stood Bishwhang, older, larger, but unmistakably Bishwhang; bending over a stone was Jake Schwartz—unaltered, it seemed, by the shading of a hair. He looked up, eying Angus truculently.

"Wa-al, what *you* want?" he growled.

Angus did not answer, could not answer. Something within him cried out to these friends

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to remember him, to recognize him, to take him again into their hearts, but he could not ask it—the boon must come from them. . . . Bishwhang looked up from his work, stared, caught some familiar gesture or expression, and his chin dropped, his mouth opened wide. . . . Then, suddenly, he dropped his stick and bellowed, "It's Angus! . . . Jake, it's Angus!"

Whereat he rushed forward, grimy face working, eyelids blinking back tears of welcome. Blubbering he snatched at Angus's hand, shook it, squeezed it, mumbling incoherent words of gladness.

"It's Angus. . . . Angus himself. . . . It's Angus come back again. Jake, Jake, it's Angus!"

Jake laid down his mallet and walked forward, rubbing his cracked and grimy hands on his trousers, scowling horribly, forbiddingly the while. Roughly he shouldered Bishwhang aside and, thrusting his face close to Angus's, stared at him with terrifying belligerence. Then, of a sudden, he put a great paw on each of the boy's shoulders and shook him, shook him until his teeth rattled, then releasing him, whirled him half around and smote him resoundingly on the back. "Hell's bells! . . ." he said, "Hell's bells!" Speech had all but forsaken him. Again he scrutinized Angus's face.

"I knowed it," he roared. "Didn't I see it in

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him, eh?" He threatened Bishwhang, dared him to disagree with this question. "He's growed into what Dave wanted, like I knew he would?" Then he cleared his throat and dared Bishwhang with a look to differ with this statement.

Angus had not spoken, but, fumbling in his vest pocket with trembling hand, he brought out a huge silver watch and extended it.

"Look," he said. . . . "See. . . . Every day—I've had it on me every day."

"Hell's bells!" said Jake again, and once more he cleared his throat of its chronic hoarseness. Bishwhang devoured Angus with his eyes, blubbering the while. . . . It was a welcome genuine past doubting.

"I've come back," Angus said. "I got to help."

"Thank Gawd for that," rumbled Jake.

"He hain't forgot us, Jake," said Bishwhang, as though discovering some marvelous fact of nature, "and he kep' the watch. I wouldn't 'a' b'lieved it, no, sir, not if it had been told me in church. . . . And to think that wunst I knowed more'n him!"

Angus unfolded before them as he could have unfolded before no other created beings. With Dave Wilkins he would have been more repressed, worshipping, for he was not without a certain awe of his benefactor—but Jake and Bishwhang walked with their feet upon his earth.

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were creatures in his mould, sympathetic to him and capable of being understood.

He became businesslike, efficient, and they gloried in the exhibition. "We've got to get out the paper for Thursday," he said. "*He* wouldn't want it to be late."

"Kin we? Be you sure you kin do it?" asked Jake.

"Why," said Bishwhang, astonished at such lack of faith, "he's educated, he is. I bet he knows most as much as Dave Wilkins does."

"We'll get it out Thursday," said Angus stolidly.

The paper came out Thursday and Rainbow was waiting for it. Never had an issue been expected with such keen anticipation. . . . If the townsfolk hoped to find some reference to Angus Burke himself, or some obtrusion of his personality, they were disappointed. There was no editorial, as is customary in such cases, praying the forbearance of the public until the authentic editor returns to his chair. There were no apologies, no announcements. . . . Angus never thought of it. He had but one idea—to get out a paper and to get out a paper which would not shame Dave.

On the day of issue Craig Browning went to the office expecting to find Angus anxious, apprehensive. He was neither. He had gone

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ahead with his task just as steadily, as stolidly, as he would have gone about sweeping out the office as he used to do. It was his task—to be done. There was no difference in degree. He had to do the thing, so he did it. There was no more than that to be said about it.

It had been no easy task, particularly the gathering of local news, but Angus mastered that—by a stroke of genius, Craig said. . . . But, queerly enough, such strokes came frequently from Angus, unexpectedly. When some expedient was necessary, he found that expedient, found it stolidly, quickly, effectively. It was not easy to tell if keen intelligence were at work, or only kind chance. This particular stroke consisted in promoting Nellie Ramsay, long in charge of the books of the concern, to a reportorial position. It was not necessary to send Nellie out to gather personals; Angus mined her. She washed out items of news as a rich placer washes out pay dirt. All that was necessary was to set her going, for she was the town's chief repository of gossip and fact. Angus merely allowed her to talk to him, and then sorted out from the mass what it was safe to print in his column of "Notes and Personals." Craig Browning had been unable to preserve a straight face when Angus told him the secret of it. As for Angus, it was impossible to say whether or

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no he had any appreciation of the humor of the device.

"It's a triumph," Browning told his wife. "It'll tickle Dave half to death when he hears of it."

"If he gets well enough to hear," said Mary, who sometimes despaired of Wilkins's recovery. "I do wish we could get Angus to stay here, or even come to meals once in a while."

"I'll make him come to dinner Sunday. We mustn't try to force him. Give him his head. Friends have to grow on Angus slowly—and he's not having the loveliest imaginable time just now. . . . Sometimes I could tear this town up by the roots and throw it in the river."

"Um. . . . I wonder how Lydia will react to him," said Mary dubiously. "She's hard to understand at times—and she's so uppity about family and pedigrees and such things. I hope she doesn't turn up her nose at him."

"If she does," said Craig shortly, "I'll turn it down again for her. . . . But for Heaven's sake, don't mention him to her, or warn her how to treat him. . . . You know Lydia:—tell her not to put pot-black on her nose, and she'd make up like the end man in a minstrel show just to show her independence."

Mary lifted her shoulders and sighed. Sometimes Lydia was a trial to her. There was no

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predicting what she would say or do in any circumstances. At times, under the greatest provocation, she would remain sweet and smiling and gentle; again, without discoverable cause, she would produce what Mary called a "tantrum." If you expected her to be haughty, she would be complaisant; if you hoped she would be deferential, she was likely to flout. . . . The trouble with Lydia was that she was honest with every minute, looking neither to the one which had just sped nor the one which was about to arrive. . . . What the immediate present demanded of her impulse—that it received.

"She ought to be home from school," said Mary, with maternal anxiety.

"She is," said Craig. "She can be viewed in the act of perusing the paper on the front porch—and I take it for a bad sign."

"That's queer. Usually she never looks at the paper."

"That," said Craig, "is the bad sign. If she has taken it into her head to interest herself in Angus, Heaven help him. . . . But maybe, like the rest of Rainbow, she merely regards this issue as a side show."

"She hasn't evidenced the slightest interest in Angus."

"Then you'd better take it she is very interested," said Craig, and went out on to the

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porch to enjoy his daily pastime of baiting his ward.

"Which one of the moon calves walked home with you to-day?" he demanded.

She only wrinkled her nose at him over the paper.

"Was it young Crane? Seems like he's trying to set up a monopoly."

"He's a *beast*! Mal Crane needn't think he can say anything he wants to about anybody. . . . And it is a good issue of the paper. If you ask me, I say it's better than Uncle Dave ever got out. . . . And Mal Crane's a beast."

"Delightfully definite. Why?"

"And he's a coward, and his father's a coward."

"Um, . . ." said Dave. He fancied he understood. So the Cranes were taking up their old rôle again; Malcolm Crane, now circuit judge, retained his old vindictiveness, and passed it on to his son. He frowned thoughtfully. The thing spelled trouble. Then, experimentally, he said, "Reading the paper, eh? . . . Looks like Angus bit off more than he can chew."

Lydia jumped to her feet, color rising to her cheeks, sparks flashing from her eyes. "I think it's fine—*fine*! I've read every word of it—and it's wonderful. . . . Uncle Dave never made a better paper, and you ought to be ashamed of

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yourself. . . . I won't have people saying mean things about him—and throwing up that—that old thing. . . . I won't. . . . I *won't!*" She clutched the paper in her arms and rushed upstairs to her room.

"Well, . . ." said Craig to himself, "if Lydia's decided to be his champion, he's in for stirring times. If there isn't trouble, she'll make it so she'll have something to champion about."

It was that evening that Angus made his first voluntary appearance on the streets. Hitherto he had concealed himself, dreading the public eye, and the manifestations likely to ensue of the public's opinion of his home-coming. He had kept to the shop and to his little room, and the town had seen nothing of him, which whetted its curiosity the more. To-night, with spurious impassivity, he walked the entire length of Main Street on his way to visit Dave Wilkins. . . . He did not pass unobserved, and he was conscious of observation and of whisperings. If he seemed tranquil to the onlooker, it was due to the set phlegmatic expression which had become a part of him; . . . if, as in the old days, some urchin had set up the cry of "Murderer!" he would have taken to his heels in panic.

He turned in at Browning's gate, his eyes upon the walk.

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"Good evening," said Lydia Canfield, a little stiffly, a trifle artificially, perhaps, for she had selected a part to play and was enacting it zealously. "I—I've been hoping you would call . . . because I want to talk about things with you."

"I—I came to see Uncle Dave——"

"I know. Doc Knipe says he's better. You can go up in a few minutes."

"Does he—know anybody?"

"No. But Doctor says he may be conscious for a little while at a time from now on—and with good nursing—which he is getting, though I'm not allowed. He's so weak. . . ."

"Yes," said Angus hopelessly.

"Please sit down a moment," she said, with the voice of one who has chosen a high mission and who proposes to engage upon its prosecution, come what may. He obeyed apprehensively, embarrassed, at a loss how to conduct himself.

"I read the paper," she said with kind, matronly encouragement, "every word of it. And I thought it was—remarkable." This, she considered to be exactly the proper word, expressing encouragement to such as Angus from one like herself. Angus looked at her for a brief instant, and she had an uneasy sensation that his look had something to do with the word "remarkable." But he did not smile. Heaven

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knows what the suppression of that smile saved him from—nor what it brought him to.

"I'm glad," she said, "that I had the courage to send for you—and the good judgment. . . . It required resolution, you know—because—well, because nobody who ought to have done it did it."

Angus nodded.

"After I'd done it," she went on, "I was sort of worried. About the wisdom of it, you know. . . . Because when I saw you last—you—well, to tell the truth, you weren't the kind of person one expects a great deal from, you know."

Angus shrank back in his chair, and Lydia, seeing how her words hurt and troubled him, was so sorry that she hastened to make matters right. "But," she said hurriedly, "as soon as I saw you, I knew it was all right."

Then Lydia came to the real object of her lying in ambush for Angus—came to it before she was quite ready, for she found the boy more difficult than she had imagined, almost, if not quite incomprehensible to her. He almost nonplussed her. At any rate he made her pause and reflect. . . . He was so quiet and so—so *strange*.

"People are talking about you," she said.

He nodded dumbly.

"It—it isn't fair," she said and paused. "Do you remember when you fought Malcolm Crane?"

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He remembered. Yes, he remembered that, and why he had fought; remembered that it was this girl before him who had made it necessary for him to fight that fight. . . . Somehow the thing established a bond between them, though she chose elaborately to ignore it. As for Angus, he might be trusted never to make reference to that important step in his life. He nodded again.

"I told him to-day you'd do it again if he didn't behave himself," she said sharply.

Angus was conscious of a new, more personal sort of anger than he had ever before experienced. He had seldom been angry. It was his nature to be restrained, to know inhibitions which others without his history could never know. He was deliberate, slow, not subject to sudden emotions. . . . But now he was angry—singularly enough not because young Crane had abused him—but because the abuse had been uttered to Lydia Canfield. . . . It was a thing for him to ponder over, and to reflect upon.

"I s'pose he was egged on by his father," she said with precocious insight.

Angus rested his chin on his palm and thought the matter over; he was always thinking matters over, and Lydia for once possessed the judgment and self-restraint to leave him to himself. Finally he spoke:

"I mustn't fight again . . . unless I have to.

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The people here don't like me. . . . They don't want me here. They think I am—you know what they think. . . . I mustn't do anything to make it worse. It would be harder for Uncle Dave."

"You've got to stand up for yourself. You can't let folks trample all over you. But, of course, it isn't gentlemanly to fight, and folks would say you were rough and rowdy, and they'd complain about you, and maybe you'd get into trouble. . . . No, I s'pose you better not, unless you can't help it . . . but what if Mal should yell at you on the street like he did once?"

"Then," said Angus, and his chin gave emphasis to his words, "I'd lick him."

During the silence which ensued both watched the approach of a young man, his face indistinct in the darkness. He paused a moment at the gate as though undecided whether to enter, and Lydia recognized him. It was Malcolm Crane. . . . It was a minor shock, a thrill. Here was a situation and she proceeded to dramatize it—the meeting of the enemies! It was exciting.

Young Crane mounted the porch to encounter a Lydia stiff and forbidding.

"Lydia," he said awkwardly, "I thought I'd come in. I, well, I thought maybe you'd got over——"

"Got over what?" she asked shortly.

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"You were mad at me this morning," he said, using the boyish formula. She made no reply, cruelly leaving him to flounder in his own difficulty. "I don't see why we should quarrel about that——"

She stamped her foot. "Malcolm Crane," she said passionately, "Angus Burke is right here on this porch, and you don't dare finish what you were going to say. . . . You can sneak behind folks' backs. . . . I told you this morning you were afraid to say those things to him."

Young Crane stepped back a pace, peering into the darkness, and words were startled from him, words of real surprise, almost of horror. "You don't mean to say you—you actually sit on the porch with him! Why, Lydia—he's a—a——"

"I'd rather have him than you," Lydia interrupted furiously. "I can sit on my porch with who I please, and it isn't any of your business, nor anybody else's business—not if I want to sit and talk with the *garbage man*!"

Crane plucked up his courage and made an effort to save his face. "Huh. . . . You that's done so much talking about family and ancestors," he sneered. "But you don't live up to it . . . I don't care about staying around where you're—entertaining an ex-convict."

Then Angus spoke, for the first time; he spoke

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rather slowly, and his voice was singularly without embarrassment for a boy who heard himself discussed in such a manner. His voice was not loud and Lydia recalled the steadiness of it afterward when she reviewed the scene.

"You'd better go," he said to Crane. "I'm not going to lick you now . . . but don't ever say that again. Don't call me names to anybody. . . ." That was all. No more was necessary. It stated his position clearly and unalterably. Angus Burke was never given to uttering unnecessary words.

Lydia kept silence, but she drew a long breath. She was impressed, became conscious of a strength in this boy, saw that it was Angus and not herself who dominated the situation. She stole a look at his face, visible in the half light which glowed from the open door. Its apathy was gone, its dullness had vanished—to be replaced by an intentness, a grimness of determination which almost frightened her.

Young Crane backed down the steps ignominiously, reached the walk, and without a word turned and walked down the street, slowly, slowly, as one walks who is afraid but who is more afraid of showing that he is afraid. . . . Angus moved his feet uneasily, and his hands passed up and down the seams of his trousers

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as if in vain search for pockets to hide in. He avoided Lydia's eyes.

"I—I must ask after Uncle Dave," he said in a low voice.

"Angus——" Lydia began, then abruptly said "Good night," and hastily turned from him and disappeared into the house. Angus had awed her, impressed her. Never again would she be able to feel that his weakness might lean upon her strength, and she resented it. She was losing the stellar rôle. . . . Something within Lydia arose in that moment and spoke truly to her. It told her, and she knew it for fact, that Angus Burke was the stronger of the two.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

HENRY G. WOODHOUSE, no less erect than he had been eight years before, when his bounty had made it possible for Angus Burke to escape from Rainbow, watched unobtrusively and with interest the conduct and accomplishments of his *protégé*. Angus was, to the splendid old gentleman, a great experiment in humanity, more engrossing to him than a story with an intricate plot. Not only did he watch with the scientific interest of your experimenter, but with the sympathetic eye of one who hopes for, and is willing to do much to bring about, a happy outcome to the experiment. . . . Having no child of his own, his lonely heart made secret plans for the boy's future. There were times when he wondered at this; was inclined to question himself, asked why it was he should feel such concern about the development of Angus when there, ready to his hand and docile, was one of his own flesh and blood—young Malcolm Crane. . . . The answer was, perhaps, that young Crane did not need him. Less apparent

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was the reason that Judge Crane was, in his devious way, training his son for the dubious career of filling a dead man's shoes. Mr. Woodhouse, who had filled his own shoes very well indeed, did not, perhaps, like overmuch to consider other feet in his leather. . . .

On the day when Dave Wilkins made his first appearance out of doors and was sitting emaciated and weak in a big chair on Craig Browning's porch, Mr. Woodhouse had been engaged on some such plans for Angus. On his way to the bank he chanced to pass the house and Wilkins waved to him a thin and feeble hand.

"Young man," said Mr. Woodhouse as he turned in at the gate, "this is good seeing."

"Sort of unexpected, too," Dave replied. "I'm wondering if I'm not an anticlimax."

"There were times when hope was faint," said the old gentleman, depositing his shining silk hat on the railing. "And, as to being an anticlimax, Wilkins, it's a thing no man can be—so long as he retains one useful muscle in his body."

"The most useful muscle in the human body," said Dave, "is located inside the skull. As I have lain here, utterly useless, I have wondered if my life in bed were not about as useful as any of my active life has managed to be. . . ."

"Nonsense."

"What have I done? What have I been?"

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What have I accomplished? I'm stepping along toward fifty, Mr. Woodhouse, and the sum total of my victories is that I've kept a one-horse paper out of bankruptcy for twenty years."

"The sum total of your victories, Wilkins, is that you have lived a life which has gained you many friends—and the respect of your enemies."

Dave laughed shortly. "That's like saying that a man's life has been a success because he had the longest funeral procession ever seen in town. . . . The world seems to have wagged pretty efficiently without my editorial advice, anyhow. . . . But then, I've had a substitute." His eyes glowed.

"I'm marveling at Angus," said Mr. Woodhouse reflectively. "Do you remember when I first saw him? I confess I was dubious. He hadn't the look of workable raw material."

"It was always there. . . . Didn't I tell you he couldn't have so much skull behind his ears for nothing? . . . I've laid upstairs and tried to imagine what it must have meant to him to come back to Rainbow—to face Rainbow. . . . There are different sorts of heroism, Mr. Woodhouse—and some sorts are about as good as others. . . . How have the folks treated him?"

"So far," said Mr. Woodhouse, "more as a curiosity than as a menace. . . . But it hasn't been easy for him. Rainbow resents him. When

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its interest in watching him walk on his hind legs has worn off, it will resent him more actively. If he had shown he was afraid the town would have been on his back before this, but he hasn't shown it. I wonder if he feels it—if he understands."

"He understands," said Dave, "better than you or I can ever hope to understand."

"In another month you'll be fit for work," said Henry G.

Dave regarded him inquiringly.

"Your paper—it doesn't offer opportunities—for more than one. When you go back there'll be no place for Angus."

"Wherever I am," Dave said fiercely, "there will always be a place for Angus."

"Isn't it possible he could do better elsewhere? . . . College, say?"

"He sha'n't go away again. . . . He's back with me—to stay. I won't let him go."

"If there were something in Rainbow——"

"Where?" asked Dave bitterly.

"I've been watching the boy. He seems to have qualities; a sort of dogged industry, patience, carefulness of detail. Mightn't those qualities be useful in—say—a bank?"

"You wouldn't dare," said Dave shortly.

Henry G. elevated his eyebrows, but made no retort. "I would like to place him in my bank—

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in a modest place, you know—to help me and to be useful all around—where he could learn the business.”

“It would cause a run on the bank.”

Henry G. unconsciously assumed his most dignified bearing, and tinged it with severity. “It would do no such thing,” he said with decision.

Dave shut his eyes. He considered, considered present and future, considered his own heart and Angus’s happiness. A tear oozed between his closed lids. “For myself—I thank you,” he said. “I’ll put it up to Angus.”

“By all means. Discuss the matter with him. The place, and all of my confidence and backing, will be ready for him when you can spare him.”

Dave watched the erect, stately old man—so aristocratic, so aloof, so lonely in his exclusiveness, yet so kindly, so scrupulously honorable, so sweet and human within the shell which grief had hardened around him. Unhurried, unharried, Henry G. Woodhouse pursued his way through the world, and from the fine calm of his face none might read that his was a well-nigh broken heart. The corroding grief and disgrace of his daughter’s disappearance; the suspense of the mystery surrounding her whereabouts, her fate, her reported death, were always

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with him—yet always hidden from the greedily prying eyes of Rainbow. . . . Nightly he prayed that she might be dead. . . .

He did not resent the curiosity of Rainbow, for he knew his people. It was their nature to be curious, and their right. They lived to themselves on an island of humanity, dependent upon the sensations produced by their own soil for the interest which other and larger and more artificial communities find in diverse matters. Curious they were, yet, in their way, kindly, generous, self-sacrificing folk. Whatever prying they might be guilty of, whatever brash questions they might be urged to ask, he condoned because underneath these manifestations lay a quick and abiding sympathy . . . A practical sympathy. Rainbow did not send flowers to a home bereaved of a loved member—it baked bread and sent wholesome loaves, it baked pies, it sent by awe-struck children cakes upon which the fine arts of the kitchen had been lavished. . . . Rainbow was a Jekyll and Hyde. . . . It was in the nature of its life that it should be so.

The old gentleman paced stiffly to his banking office, retired to his private room where hung the oil portrait of his father, and closed the door after him. Before his desk he sat inactive, hands in lap, eyes fixed upon the clean blotting pad. Once, twice, in indecision, he reached toward a

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small, locked drawer, but as often withdrew his hand and shook his head. . . . In that little drawer were five photographs of his daughter Kate, the first in infancy, the last in young womanhood. He looked at them almost never. To-day he did not look at them, but resolutely set his hands to the work which called him, putting from his thoughts that which had been and that which might have been—and could never be. . . .

Angus Burke, uninformed of the plans being made for him by others, sat in Dave Wilkins's chair in Dave Wilkins's room. He was busy. Even the few months of his man-life had altered him; at once he looked younger and more mature; he looked less phlegmatic and more determined. His face was not less heavy to a first glance, but a second made one grasp after the elusive wraith of a new expression—one which was there, yet vanished under the eye. . . . Presently he arose, put on his hat, and walked to the hotel for supper. He had taken to going to the hotel after deliberation. After the meal he went to see Dave Wilkins, whom he found, blanket-wrapped, in the Brownings' parlor.

"Well," said Dave happily, "I'm almost a man again to-day."

"I'm—glad." That was all. Dave's eyes twinkled. After a few moments of silence he

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said quizzically, "I don't calc'late you'd hazard a remark if I waited till midnight."

Angus grinned. "There isn't anything to say," he said.

"Mr. Woodhouse was here to-day—talked about you. . . . He wants you to come to work for him." Dave stated the fact suddenly and baldly and then waited to see what expression would alter Angus's face. But Angus was the better waiter—nothing happened except that Angus waited. "I told him I'd ask you what you thought about it. What *do* you think?"

"The paper——" Angus began.

"I'll be back in a month—and then you'll be out of a job."

This was true. Angus had never considered it before: When Dave came back he would be superfluous, a burden.

"There—there won't be anything for me to do," he said blankly.

"We could make something for you to do. You're welcome, you're wanted. . . . But here, Angus, is a chance, a greater chance than I can ever give you to make something of yourself. . . . And you would be near me."

"Could I—keep on sleeping in—my old room over the shop?"

Dave turned away his head. . . . "That's part of the bargain. You've got to promise to stay

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there—with me—or I sha'n't let you go. . . . You're my boy, Angus—my son! . . . Mr. Woodhouse can have your days—but we'll sleep under the same roof." The boy gulped and looked out of the window.

"I'll go. . . ." he said.

"I knew you would. . . . I'm glad."

"But," said Angus after a prolonged silence, "what will—everybody say? Won't folks be afraid? In the bank? About their money—you know—about their money?"

"Don't ever say a thing like that again," said Dave fiercely.

"But——"

"If anybody hints at such a thing in your hearing, I don't care who or when or where, and you don't thrash him, I'll thrash you. Remember that. . . . When you go to work for Mr. Woodhouse forget everything in your life but that—and me. Make up your mind you are the equal of everybody and better than most. Make up your mind to show 'em all. Climb! Climb higher than any of them. You're a first-class man, Angus, so act as if you knew it. A show of confidence in yourself is half the battle. You do know it, don't you?"

Again Angus hesitated. "Yes," he said presently.

Dave changed the subject. "You've never told

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me how it was you came back to Rainbow? How did you know I was sick? Who told you?"

Angus did not know how to evade questions; indeed it was an art he never learned. His methods were always direct. Now he kept silence.

"I never could figure it out," said Dave. "Nobody knew where you were but the Brownings and Mr. Woodhouse, and neither of them sent for you."

"No," said Angus.

"Who did, then?"

"It was—somebody else."

Dave wrinkled his nose, as was his custom in moments of perplexity. . . . He began to understand dimly that something—some incomprehensible scruple—was holding the boy silent.

"Is it a secret?" he asked.

"Nobody said I shouldn't tell."

"I see. . . . Then, of course, you mustn't tell. I shouldn't have asked."

At that instant Lydia Canfield, who had been reading quietly in the next room, hurled her book to the floor and rushed through the portières flushed, eyes snapping, in a rage.

"I did it," she cried, "I did it. . . . So there! And I'd do it again."

"Well. . . . *We-ll.* . . ." said Dave.

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"And nobody has to keep secrets for me. *Nobody.*"

"Now, now. . . . What's the use setting the house afire?" asked Dave.

"I won't be shielded. I won't have him trying to shield me . . . or anybody else trying it. When I do anything I'm not afraid of the consequences. He needn't think I'm ashamed of sending for him—or afraid, for I'm not."

Angus was disconcerted, highly uncomfortable, and a little frightened. He did not know what to make of Lydia's outburst, nor see wherein his transgression lay.

"I'm sure," said Dave with mock stateliness, "that I'm under a weight of obligation to you for sending for Angus. It was the wise thing to do."

"Of course I knew *that*," she said. "Anybody with sense would. But I don't want anybody protecting *me*—and you just understand that from now on, Angus Burke!" Whereat she flounced out of the room, leaving Angus aghast and Wilkins shaking with laughter. It was Angus's first encounter with the incomprehensibility of woman's temper.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A MONTH later, as the office clock was striking eight, Henry G. Woodhouse came out of Dave Wilkins's printing office with Angus Burke and walked across the street to the bank. Chet Bowen, the cashier, and Gene Goff, book-keeper, office boy, teller, janitor, and what-not, looked up as they entered. It was their custom to say good morning to their employer and to be greeted in return with a dignified, "Good morning, gentlemen."

But this morning neither of the gentlemen behind the partition spoke. The sight of Angus Burke entering with Henry G. struck them dumb. It was as if the Angel Gabriel were to be seen in companionship with a burglar. Chet bent over his ledger, as one does in circumstances which require his delicacy to make pretense of blindness.

Instead of proceeding to his office, Mr. Woodhouse stopped before Chet's window. "Good morning," he said. "This is Angus Burke, as you doubtless know, Mr. Bowen. He comes to work for us to-day."

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Chet was stunned. He was shocked. He was bewildered. He stared at his employer and at Angus, and rather fancied himself to be the victim of some sort of evil dream. The thing was absurd, impossible! "Not—not here in the bank!" he exclaimed. It was a cry of expostulation.

"Yes," said Mr. Woodhouse, "in the bank. His duties, in the beginning, will be those of my personal assistant."

Leaving his horror-stricken employees, the old gentleman motioned Angus into his private office and closed the door. Chet turned his head slowly and peered at Gene, who returned the gaze open-mouthed.

"Well——" he said, and then words failed him.

"In the bank!" exclaimed Gene. "Right where folks deposits their money—where money's a-layin' around under foot, so to speak. Folks 'li be drawin' out as soon as they hear of it."

"And him a murderer, too—for 'twa'n't nothin' but Craig Brownin's cleverness got him out of it! . . . Reg'lar desperado—that's what he was. . . . Think of us bein' throwed with him all the time! Why, the' hain't nobody in town has anythin' to do with him. . . ."

"His father, he was a thief too. That's what

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took Sheriff Bates out there to git himself killed. . . . Perty kittle of fish, that's what *I* say."

Gene slammed shut his ledger and Chet devoted himself to thumbing over a pile of notes and mortgages; but neither could set his mind on his work. Both were wondering what was going on behind Henry G. Woodhouse's door. . . .

In the privacy of that room the old gentleman motioned Angus to a chair, and the boy sat down diffidently. Mr. Woodhouse regarded him and felt a certain satisfaction—as if he had had something to do with arranging the boy's features. They were highly satisfactory features—if only they were a trifle more mobile, a bit less grave—and if that set, almost strained expression could be made to disappear.

"Are you good at figures, Angus?" he asked.

"I'm not very quick, sir—but——" He hesitated.

"But in the end you generally get the right answer. . . . Is that what you were going to say?"

Angus moved his feet in embarrassment. "I—I almost always got my arithmetic right in school," he said, "but sometimes it took me an awful long time. I've had to sit up—almost all night to work out an example."

Mr. Woodhouse thought that this dogged determination, this laborious demand for ac-

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curacy was a quality not to be despised in a banker. He turned to his desk and began opening his mail. Angus coughed. There was a thing he wanted to say, something was on his mind, but he did not know how to commence.

"I——" he began.

"What is it?" Mr. Woodhouse asked, turning courteously.

"They don't want me to work here."

"Who doesn't? What do you mean?"

"They—the two men out there."

"Chet and Gene?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Woodhouse frowned and considered. "How do you know?" he asked.

"It was—the way they looked—when you told them I was going to."

Mr. Woodhouse reflected on this; he understood something of the unpleasantness of Angus's life—understood the sensitiveness of the boy—how, always, he was on the outlook for hostile expression, for signs that he was not wanted. The old banker sighed, and put his hand on Angus's shoulder.

"My boy," he said, "suppose they do object? Suppose they try to make things unpleasant for you?"

Angus considered. He expected the cashier and his assistant would make things unpleasant

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for him. It was natural they should—everybody in Rainbow did. People who knew who he was always made things uncomfortable for him.

"I don't know," said Angus.

"Think it out," said Mr. Woodhouse. "Have you a *right* to work here?"

Angus hesitated, then he said, "I would stay anyhow—if you kept on wanting me to."

"Why?"

"Because—this is *your* bank. They can't say who you shall hire unless you want them to. If I worked in a bank, and the man I worked for hired somebody I—didn't want to work with, why, I'd stop working there. I got a right to do that. But if I stayed and worked I wouldn't have a right to pick on the man. . . . I've *got* to work somewhere. I'm fit to work with folks. I've got to think that. I got to stand up for myself. . . . If I quit working here because they wanted me to—it wouldn't be right. I'd be giving in. Maybe, everywhere I went to work, there'd be someone that didn't want me. . . . I've got to begin staying some place. So I'll stay here if you keep on wanting me."

"I want you," said Mr. Woodhouse simply. "I think I shall come to want you very much. Sit here a moment."

He went into the banking office, closing the

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door after him, and stood a moment until he had the eyes of his employees.

"Gentlemen," he said, "may I have your undivided attention for a moment?"

Their curiosity made them quick to respond.

"Angus Burke is coming here to work," said Mr. Woodhouse in his grave, dignified, unhurried way. "He is coming to stay—I hope. It has occurred to me that you may share the absurd prejudice against him which seems to be so lamentably general in Rainbow—a prejudice not without a foundation in malice, and wholly without justification. What I wish to impress upon you now is this: Angus Burke must be treated as courteously and as fairly as you would treat me. . . . I am sure I shall be understood."

They did understand; Mr. Woodhouse possessed the quality of making himself clear and impressive; no threat, no mentioned penalties were necessary. . . .

Half an hour later Druggist Ramsay came in, lowered his voice, and glancing toward Mr. Woodhouse's door, whispered: "'Tain't so is it—the rumor that's runnin' around town? That young Burke's hired to work in the bank?"

Chet nodded, his lips primly compressed.

"Wa-al, I snum!" exclaimed Mr. Ramsay. "I calc'late folks 'll be some stirred when they know it's true. . . ." And with his tidbit of news

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he hurried away to the post office, where he knew it would find a ready welcome.

It did find a welcome. Before noon Rainbow seethed with it, boiled with it, steamed and bubbled with it. Rainbow was scandalized, affronted, the more so that Henry G. Woodhouse had put this thing upon them. There was a feeling of helplessness in their expostulations, for they stood in fear of the banker. There was nothing they could do about it—not even withdraw their deposits. They felt that Mr. Woodhouse was not a man who would tolerate their withdrawing their deposits, so they grumbled and vaped.

As for its effect on Angus Burke—Rainbow decided, that, unable to vent its displeasure upon Henry G it would concentrate on Angus. Sentiment against him crystallized, became malignant. The town charged him with pushing himself in deliberately where he was not wanted; with flaunting himself before its eyes. The thing which had been vague and incoherent became clear and malign. . . . Judge Crane played his part in this, and Judge Crane had a following. Two motives inspired him—jealousy of Craig Browning and petty malice toward Angus. . . . Also the unpleasant fear which always came to him when anybody formed a relationship with

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Henry G. Woodhouse, whose fortune was destined to pass to Malcolm Crane, Junior. . . . Judge Crane determined to take active steps for the abolishment of Angus Burke.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

IN Rainbow where even "hired girls" stay in the same family for twenty years, a year of service is lightly regarded. If a young man began as a grocery clerk at eighteen he was usually found in the same store, engaged in slicing cheese and weighing out sugar at forty. Jobs were permanent. So, at the end of Angus Burke's first twelve months in the bank, he was still looked upon by the citizenry as having "started to work for Mr. Woodhouse." They were commencing to be accustomed to seeing him in the bank, but had not begun to forgive him for being there. . . . The year had made no impression upon Rainbow; upon Angus its effect had been impressive.

He was now drawing toward his majority—older than his years, still of the class of silent men, never volunteering conversation, smiling seldom, laughing never—in public. The world offered him little to laugh at. It was only latterly that he laughed at all; such as it was it was intimate, secluded laughter, never to be paraded, and kept for his intimate friends.

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Social Rainbow was not aware of his existence. It was a jolly town which, compelled to manufacture its own pleasures, was rich in picnics, sleigh-rides, dances, "home-talent" plays and parties. These, however, were for those who possessed caste, and almost everybody in town except Angus was enough of a Brahmin for these. He knew men during their business hours, men who tolerated him because they were compelled to tolerate, but whose attitude was not friendly; their homes he saw only from without. The younger folks he knew not at all, because their orbits did not touch his. Only two women did Angus meet in a social way—Lydia Canfield and Mary Browning, and to leave him alone with either of them was to strike him with silence and with discomfort. Mary was always gentle, solicitous, motherly, and Angus repaid her with a warm, unexpressed affection; to Lydia he was not quite a human being to be dealt with as a human being. He was different, set apart, something which had not been born, but manufactured. Somehow she felt she had had a part in his manufacturing and therefore was highly interested. . . . Angus admired her as one might admire a distant star. The thought of friendship with her never occurred to him. She was Lydia Canfield! And Lydia Canfield was an uncertain, tempestuous, incomprehensible

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creature. . . . He sought to accustom himself to her moods and humors and sudden changes, but never could he grow accustomed. . . . Theirs was a queer relationship. . . .

It was about this time that Lydia made a queer, rather startling, and altogether momentous discovery. Silently she had been regarding Angus during dinner, studying him abstractedly, with a puzzled look. When he was gone she said to Mary Browning, "Why, Mary, Angus Burke is actually good-looking."

"Yes," said Mary, "he's a wholesome-looking boy. Too grave for his years."

"I don't mean that," Lydia objected quickly, "he looks—oh, as if he'd had a grandfather."

Mary smiled. "You'll be trying to furnish him with ancestors next. . . . I do wish you thought less about family, Lydia."

"What better could I think about? . . . But, just the same, he looks like a gentleman." There was a touch of stubbornness in her tone. "And it doesn't seem possible. It *isn't* possible. . . . I saw his father once."

"Nonsense. When could you have seen his father?"

Lydia's eyes filled with the remembered horror of that meeting, with the dreadfulness of the event, and with the loathsomeness of Titus Burke. "It was a long time ago," she said

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evasively. . . . That was all. But the discovery of Angus's personableness and the remembrance of Angus's father offset each other. The recollection was unfortunate for Angus.

Lydia's attitude toward Angus was peculiar, and now became more so. It is doubtful if she had any clear definition in her mind of her feelings toward the young man. Undoubtedly there was friendship of a sort, tinged with condescension and with tolerance—the toleration of your aristocrat for one too lowly to be considered as impinging upon her life at all. She pitied him for his extraction, and was contemptuous of him for the same reason. On the whole she regarded him rather as a *protégé* than as an acquaintance or a friend.

It would be more difficult, indeed impossible, to describe Angus Burke's sentiments toward the girl. He did not feel for her such affection as a brother would manifest toward a sister. They were too far apart for that. Friendship is a placid, smoothly flowing sentiment, very sweet, but very human and finite. There is nothing mystic, nothing occult about friendship. . . . In Angus Burke's regard for Lydia was mysticism. Doubtless Angus was incapable of understanding what a queen of the fairies meant to the normal child, but, as was the fairy to the child, so, after a fashion, was Lydia to Angus;

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also there was something of the reverence of the serf for the princess . . . something of the fear of that serf.

The lives of Angus and Lydia, converging from extremes, had touched, and touching, left their impress. Each, after his way, was occupied with the other far more than either imagined. The boy had his strength, the girl her power. Both were distinct, individual, personalities to be reckoned with. Such people cannot meet on a negative plane. But, let it be understood, love or thoughts of love had no residence in either. Their relationship was unique. . . .

On the tenth of September Lydia Canfield would be eighteen years of age. In Rainbow there is one manner, and one only, of celebrating the birthday—the good, wholesome gathering of friends in the home—friends bearing gifts; in short, an old-fashioned party. Lydia invited young Rainbow to her party, and the town buzzed with anticipation. . . . Impelled by one of her sudden impulses Lydia invited Angus Burke.

“Are you coming to my party, Angus?” she asked unexpectedly.

After a slight hesitation he replied with admirable directness, “No.”

“Why?”

“I’ve never been to a party.”

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"That's no reason why you shouldn't come to one now."

He did not answer this, though she waited for a reply.

"I want you to come," she said presently.

"No," said Angus.

Lydia's face flushed dangerously. "Don't you want to come?"

"I don't think I ought to come."

"Why?"

"The—the others might not like to have me there."

Lydia flared instantly. "It's my party and I'll have whoever I want. . . . I never asked you to do anything before, Angus Burke. And I'm entitled to ask you something. I want you to come. Won't you? As a favor?"

Angus hesitated again. "I'm afraid——" he began.

"That's it," she said scornfully. "You're afraid. You're a coward. . . . You're afraid of people. I—I hate people who are afraid."

"Perhaps," said Craig Browning from the doorway, "Angus has some small cause."

Lydia disregarded him, as was to be expected. "Won't you come? Please?" It was not often Lydia pleaded.

Angus, wearing his old look of dumb perplexity, peered down at the ground, moving his

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feet uneasily. He feared to risk affront and indignity, feared Rainbow would show openly, as it always had done, its contempt for him. But, after a while, he lifted his eyes and said slowly, "I'll come—for you."

"I knew you would," said Lydia, delighted in her victory. "You'll like it, too, see if you don't."

"You don't know. . . . You don't understand. People always remember. . . ." He had forgotten the party now, forgotten everything save recollections of his boyhood, terrible recollections. "I'm the same boy. They don't call *murderer* after me, but they *think* it. It's as bad. I can see them thinking it. . . . Ten years ago they wouldn't let me go to the same school with their children. They won't want me at parties with their children to-day."

"Don't you want any friends?" she demanded.

"I would like more friends. But I have Uncle Dave and Mr. Browning and Jake Schwartz and Bishwhang—but I—would like more." His voice was wistful.

"Jake Schwartz and Bishwhang!" Lydia said with an air of supercilious contempt.

Angus frowned. "They're my friends," he said simply. "I wouldn't trade them for any others in the world."

"But aren't you dreadfully dull? You have no fun at all. What do you do?"

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"Sometimes I work—evenings. Then Uncle Dave and I read together. Sometimes I walk in the country with Bishwhang. . . . I read a good deal. I like to read."

"What do you read?" Lydia asked, with curiosity aroused.

"Uncle Dave's books. Stories like *Ivanhoe* and the ones by Dickens. . . . I like them. Uncle Dave and I just finished *The Wealth of Nations*. Now we're reading a book by a man named Lecky—about Morals. . . ."

"Do you *like* such books?"

"They're interesting. They tell you things that come handy every day—especially men like John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. They've thought out things; all you have to do is think the thoughts they've gotten ready for you."

"Why," said Lydia almost childishly, "you know more than I do. I couldn't read such things." She was impressed, overshadowed. This recital of Angus's literary adventures magnified him in her eyes, for her grandfather had set culture as the thing in the world of next importance to family.

Presently Dave Wilkins called in from the porch that he was ready to go, and Angus arose.

"Remember," said Lydia, "you promised to come to my party."

"Yes," said Angus. ". . . I'll come."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE Brownings' yard was colorful with paper lanterns; the house had that gala, hospitable appearance which comes from abundance of light. Carpets were spread on the grass and chairs and benches were scattered here and there according to Lydia Canfield's taste in such matters. Already the young folks were arriving, stiffly, primly, starched and brushed—bashfully formal at first before the shell ice of holiday decorum was broken. The Trueman boys were earliest to appear, followed quickly by others, known to us in former days. Sammy Hammond escorted Myrtle Cuyler; chubby Walter Pratt puffed in alone. The Bowen twins made their identical appearance, and Harold Cuyler—then scores of others. Young Malcolm Crane, not yet returned to college after his summer vacation, was among the latest, for his toilet was a matter Mal was likely to tarry over. Each guest carried his present for the hostess, and each stood by with ill-concealed impatience to see her open it and to hear her exclamation of delight.

Lydia was excited, in a very fever of enjoy-

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ment, radiantly lovely with a sort of elfin loveliness; she sparkled, she flashed, an embodiment of wonderful, girlish life. When she moved it was not by a process requiring muscles of a material body, but by some more graceful means known only to the fairies themselves. . . . She met her guests just within the gate, welcomed them, cried out at their gifts. She was dressed in pink. . . .

"You look—fine," young Crane whispered cautiously. In Rainbow one pays compliments cautiously, for one is not used to tendering that medium of exchange.

"Of course I do," Lydia said. "I spent two hours dressing. Isn't it lovely? . . . Put your things in the room at the head of the stairs."

Angus Burke had not appeared, was not as yet missed by his busy, excited hostess. He delayed his appearance as long as he dared, shortening by as much as might be ventured the time of his suffering—for he knew he was about to suffer. At last he forced himself to approach the gate, stopped with his hand on its post and looked at the scene, striving to compel himself to enter. . . . As he stood so Lydia saw him, abruptly left her companion and hurried to him.

"Angus," she cried, "come in. . . . I'm so glad you came."

He followed her to the house, looking reso-

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lutely before him. He knew he must be observed, was informed by an extra, well-developed sense of the commotion his appearance created, of whisperings and nudgings and of staring eyes. The general clatter silenced itself as it will on the happening of some event of common interest, some awkward, embarrassing event. Lydia chattered on.

"Put your hat upstairs," she said, "I'll wait for you."

He went up obediently. As he descended he fumbled in his pocket for a small package.

"Here," he said awkwardly, extending it to Lydia.

"A present! Oh. . . . You remembered." She laid a slender, vivid hand on his arm—a touch he was to remember for years, his first contact with her. He winced. "I shall like it better than anybody else's," she said. "I know I shall."

"I didn't know. . . . I never bought a present before. It was hard to decide." If only she had known how hard it had been to decide; what hours of thought, of mental agony had gone to the selection of that small gift!

Lydia wondered what it might be, was almost afraid to open it, fearing some absurdity which would lay Angus open to the ridicule of her friends, but it is to her credit that she smiled

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brightly and removed the paper coverings with no hint of her perturbation. Inside was a leather-bound book, beautifully tooled, though Lydia was scarcely able to appreciate the fineness of it. What she could see, however, was the simplicity of it, the excellence, the sound good taste of it. . . . It was Milton's Sonnets! She looked sharply at Angus, appraising him as she had never done before. Somehow this slight thing elevated him in her estimation. Perhaps it was the subtle compliment of supposing Milton's Sonnets were suitable to her mental caliber—for Rainbow sets store by what it knows as "culture."

"Thank you," she said simply.

"I . . . liked them," he said. "The one about his blindness . . . and so I hoped you . . ."

"Indeed I shall like them, and you shall read them to me. . . . Come, I want you to meet everybody."

She permitted her hand to rest on his arm as they passed out on the porch. It was plain they were expected, for the air carried a tingle of suspense as though the guests awaited some *dénouement*. Without affectation Lydia introduced Angus to Myrtle Cuyler, who spoke primly, almost affrightedly. She presented him to the Bowen twins, to several others grouped about the steps, and then conveyed him down the

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yard under the swaying lines of gaudy paper lanterns—and in her secret thoughts she could not help comparing the manner, the poise, the *dignity* of her companion with those to whom she had presented him. He underwent the ordeal much more creditably than they, and she flushed with pride in him. “Why,” she said to herself, “he acts and looks more like a gentleman than any of them.” Which is what silence, reserve, and modesty can do for the least of us.

“I want you to have a good time—at your first party,” she told him. “You *will* have a good time, won’t you?”

Angus smiled. “I will—watch,” he said a trifle wistfully.

At last Lydia left him with a little group and excused herself to attend to other duties of hospitality. Angus knew a sensation of breathlessness, like a fish cast up on a sand bar. He did not know what to do, or what to say; yet his face was imperturbable, grave, noteworthy in its gravity. He wished himself a thousand miles away, yet his uneasiness was not apparent. To eyes which did not know his history he seemed a young man of fine poise and bearing. . . .

“Won’t you sit down here?” invited a girl whose name he did not remember—a guest in Rainbow. It was a compliment to this bearing of his, though he was unconscious of it. She

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made a place beside her and began to prattle to him—and because he knew she did not know him, did not realize to whom she was talking, and because she possessed social graces of whose very existence he was unaware, he found himself inexplicably at his ease.

“I’ve met almost everybody here before,” she said. “I’ve been in Rainbow two weeks, you know. How is it I have never seen you? Have you been away?”

“No, I haven’t been away.”

“I presume you are too busy and important to bother with calls and parties and such things. Somehow you *look* more important than these other boys. Why is it?” She looked at him through her lashes and thought what a fine, interesting boy he was.

“I never go places,” he said slowly. “This is the first party I was ever at.”

“You’re making fun of me.”

“No.” He shook his head and did not look at her.

“But——” she hesitated, intrigued, yet feeling she was treading on forbidden ground. Abruptly she changed the subject to the safer one of books, that refuge of the young, and to happenings in the world—to cosmic issues and to the infinite—and Angus found himself talking, for here were matters he was equipped to discuss.

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These were matters about which he talked to Dave Wilkins and to Craig Browning, matters which interested him, called out the best that was in him—displayed a quick intelligence, a ready expression of ideas, and no mean originality of thought. . . . He did not know he was talking to one who was, in effect, a guest of honor, to a girl whose social place in the world outside Rainbow was one to which even Lydia Canfield looked with respect and possibly with envy. She regarded Angus with ever growing surprise. He was the sort of young man she had not expected to encounter in this backwater of Rainbow.

Suddenly she became aware of his silence, a tense, listening silence, and she lifted her eyes to his face. It was gray, drawn. Little white lumps appeared at the corners of his jaws, and in his eyes was such a misery as she had never before seen looking out from the face of a human being. . . . Behind the bench on which they sat, concealed in the darkness, she heard two boys talking, Malcolm Crane speaking hotly, but in subdued tones to young Hammond.

"It's a shame. . . . It's an outrage," he was saying. "Whatever possessed Lydia to invite him here?"

"No telling what Lydia will do when she takes the bit in her teeth," Hammond answered. "But

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usually she's so all-fired particular about who she has anything to do with. . . . I'll bet she did it just to show folks she dared."

"She never thought of folks," said Crane. "She never bothers about what people will think . . . but she ought to in a case like this. Decent folks won't have that fellow shoved down their throats even by Lydia Canfield. . . . Just see the way she's dared to introduce him to everybody. Lucky she didn't bring him near me."

"Hush . . . here she comes now."

"I'm going to tell her what I think."

"Better not."

Young Crane grunted angrily. Then Angus heard Lydia's voice.

"What are you boys hiding here for? If you're planning something you just better hadn't. . . . I won't have any jokes to-night. Behave yourselves."

"We were talking about that Burke," Crane said doggedly.

Lydia said nothing, but her silence was significant.

"He has no business in decent company, meeting people. Why, Lydia, folks wouldn't have let their children come if they'd known he was going to be here."

The girl beside Angus felt him draw himself together, looked again at his face, gasped as she

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perceived the suffering it wore as a tragic mask.
. . . She too listened.

"Malcolm Crane, if you don't like having him here you can go home—straight home," Lydia flared.

"It isn't right, and you know it. . . . You know what he is. His father was a thief, and he . . . killed a man. He's a jailbird."

"Don't you talk that way about him. I told him when you did it before. He isn't a jailbird—he was innocent. Uncle Craig told me so. It was your father and his meanness and his selfishness that made them have Angus in court at all. Your father was small and mean like you are—small and miserable and horrid. . . . I wish I hadn't asked you to come."

"Hush, everybody'll hear you."

"I want them to. . . . I want them to know what I think of you—going around telling lies and stirring up folks against Angus. . . . If it wasn't for your father and you people would forget. He's better than you are. He's honest. And he knows more than you do, and people like Mr. Woodhouse trust him. . . . He's worth a dozen like you, and he's more of a gentleman, too."

"Lydia! . . ."

Angus got up slowly now, the misery was gone from his eyes, his shoulders were thrown back

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—an involuntary gesture—his face wore an expression which the girl by his side could not identify, but it impressed her with its maturity, with its dignity.

“I—I’ve got to——” he said and stopped.

“Are they talking about *you*?” asked the girl.

“Yes—about me.”

“How cowardly—and I don’t believe a word of it.”

He looked down at her and there was a strange smile about the corners of his mouth. She read his gratitude. “Nobody wants me here,” he said, “I must go—this—is why I’ve never been to a party before.”

“Don’t go,” she said in a whisper. Tears stood in her eyes. “Don’t go. . . . Don’t let them drive you away.”

“You don’t understand. . . . It’s true. I am a—jailbird.”

She was a little thing, a stranger to him, but she owned a golden heart and a soul of sweetness. During a short silence she looked at him. “No,” she said, “it’s not true. . . . I shall be very glad to have you stay—with me. . . . I shall be proud.” It was a small thing, not costly to her, but generous, womanly. She would never know how much it meant to Angus Burke.

At that moment Lydia stepped into the light, followed by the expostulating Crane and the

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cowed Hammond. She saw Angus and his companion, and stopped.

"There, Malcolm Crane—there's Angus Burke. Say it to him if you dare," she said.

Crane halted, fists doubled, gave back a step. Angus's companion watched him; it was a climax, a test. How would her friend come through an ordeal such as this, an ordeal which would call out the worst, or bring into play the finest qualities of a gentleman? Angus spoke, slowly, seriously, his voice low, almost gentle.

"No, Lydia," he said, "he mustn't say it here. We—we must pretend he hasn't—said anything here—or that I've heard. . . ."

"I don't care——" Lydia began passionately.

"Please, Lydia," said Angus. He turned to Crane. "Just go away," he said.

Lydia hesitated, looked angrily at Angus and felt her eyes imprisoned, felt herself mastered by the strength of him. . . . She turned abruptly and walked away. Crane and Hammond were glad to follow her. . . . Angus drew a deep breath. The girl touched Angus's arm and he looked down into her face.

"Mr. Burke," she said tremulously, "that was fine—a fine thing to do—and you—it was the way a gentleman should act."

Suddenly there was a tossing and jumbling of paper lanterns; a string had broken, and a dozen

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or so, still attached, came tumbling down across the shoulders of Myrtle Cuyler, who leaped, terrified, to her feet, tossing the lanterns about so that one was fired by its candle, then another and another. Instantly the flames seized upon the girl's filmy dress and leaped upward. . . . She shrieked. . . .

The visitor missed Angus from her side; saw him leap to Myrtle Cuyler; saw no other form in motion, for the party seemed paralyzed with fright. Angus's coat was already off. Roughly he seized Myrtle, hurling her to the ground, wrapping his coat about her face. . . . The rug upon which she fell he snatched, and in it he rolled her blazing body—rolled her to and fro, beating the yellow tongues of flame with his bare hands. . . . It was over in a matter of seconds; a dress was ruined, a girl frightened into hysterics but injured only negligibly. . . . That was all.

Angus stood coatless, looking about him, blinking from the smoke, the center which drew every eye. He realized how conspicuous he had made himself and was frightened by it, achingly embarrassed, and his eyes sought an avenue of escape.

Somebody was carrying Myrtle Cuyler into the house; the rest surged toward Angus, who

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turned without picking up his coat, and strode toward the gate. It was a flight.

The stranger girl who had stood his friend laid her hand on his arm as he passed. "You were splendid. . . . You thought—and did something—while everybody else was in a panic."

"I—I didn't think," he said in his old, troubled, vague way. "I—just did it." Unconsciously he moved his hands as though in pain and looked down at them with a perplexed look, as if he could not understand what troubled them.

"You're burned," said the girl. "Let me see."

"No. . . . No. . . . I must go. . . ."

"Let me see your hands," she said sharply.

The palms were blackened and blistered. She touched them lightly, gently. "Come into the house this minute," she ordered. "They must be dressed."

He shook his head stubbornly. "No. . . . I've got to go." He would not be stayed, and seeing his face and the misery of it, she did not attempt to hold him further. "Good night," she said quietly. "I shall be very glad—and proud—to have you call."

Angus made no answer, but strode hurriedly out of the yard and down the street. Behind him he left an excited clatter. . . . Perhaps he was not being elevated into a hero, but something

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was happening—he was being created into a different sort of a celebrity than he had been. . . .

Presently Lydia came out of the house. “Myrtle’s all right,” she told everyone, and then she caught her breath. “I’m so glad—so glad. It would have been awful to happen at my party.” Her eyes flitted about the yard. “Where is he? Where’s Angus Burke? . . . If it hadn’t been for him——”

“He’s gone,” said Angus’s little friend. “He hurried away, I couldn’t make him stay.”

“Of course,” said Lydia. “He would.”

“I—won’t you tell me all about him? . . . I admire him. I asked him to call. . . . Do you suppose he’ll come? . . . He’s the most interesting—he’s the very finest young man I’ve met. He was so quick, so splendid—and so—so very much a gentleman.”

Lydia was conscious of a feeling of resentment toward this girl whom she had admired, almost of dislike—and she wondered why. Also there was amazement and something of chagrin. This girl, accustomed to a better society than Rainbow knew, *admired* Angus Burke, had asked him to call. This girl called him a gentleman, and hoped, really hoped he would come to see her! The thing was impossible. Angus Burke was not a person to whom such a thing could happen, about whom such things could be said.

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. . . And yet, looking over that evening, she knew he was such an individual, capable of arousing admiration, deserving of such praise. . . . But she did not like to hear this girl uttering the praise. She paused in her thoughts—thunderstruck. Could it be possible she was jealous of this girl, jealous because of Angus Burke? Lydia sneered at herself for the thought. It was absurd, ridiculously impossible. Yet something was not right, something moved her—and decidedly she did not like this girl.

“I’ve got to go in to Myrtle now,” she said shortly.

That night Angus Burke was the subject of conversation in many homes. Without meaning to do so he had gained a minor victory over Rainbow; had taken a longer stride forward than he had ever taken before. In a measure he had become heroic. At any rate he had performed an action requiring courage, resolution, a sort of heroic ability which nobody else had possessed at the needful moment . . . and it is impossible utterly to despise a quasi-hero.

As for Lydia Canfield, she was compelled to think of Angus in a new way. For the first time she regarded him as an individual capable of social possibilities; as a person whom knowledgeable persons could regard as their equal. The words of the girl visitor remained with her—

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and they were words coming from one with authority to speak. . . . Add to this that Angus, throughout the evening, in her every contact with him, her every sight of him, had impressed his personality upon her. . . . As she lay inviting sleep, this personality of his seemed to impend; it seemed to frown over her, big, imminent, startling. . . .

CHAPTER NINETEEN

RAINBOW'S post office was always crowded when the three o'clock mail was distributed; it was a daily clearing house of gossip, a club with a general membership, an institution of importance in the political and financial and social life of the town. On the afternoon following Lydia Canfield's party, the session was devoted almost exclusively to Angus Burke. He had become a personage. The town set a new value on him . . . a value not solid but tinsel. Temporarily his act of the night before had gilded him, had caused other matters to be lost sight of which, presently, would be remembered again. Every phase of his rescue of Myrtle Cuyler was discussed and its possibilities followed into the remote future. Rainbow loved to speculate upon the future.

Lydia Canfield came through the door and bent to open her post box as Mrs. Bowen, wife of Chet, was saying:

"Wouldn't it be funny if it turned out to be a romance, like in books? Angus Burke's old

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enough to marry, and so's Myrtie Cuyler. And wouldn't it be a kind of fascinatin' story if this savin' her life was to bring them together—him bein' what he is and her bein' who she is. You read about sich things, and I'll venture that's what'll come about."

Lydia turned a displeased face upon Mrs. Bowen, and noticed for the first time how common Mrs. Bowen looked and how dowdy her hat was and how loud her voice. She had always rather liked Mrs. Bowen before, and wondered now how it was she had never noticed such glaring defects.

"Be a fine thing for young Burke if he was to marry into a fam'ly like that," Mrs. Bowen went on. "Folks'd have to take another tack with him then. . . . Kind of hard on Myrtie, maybe, but she's Myrtie Cuyler, jest the same, and folks 'ud have to put up with her husband whoever he was. . . . Anyhow, my husband Chet says young Burke's gettin' on fine in business. He's got to kind of like him."

Lydia stood very straight and severe; she eyed Mrs. Bowen coldly. "Angus Burke doesn't have to marry anybody," she said frostily, in her most lofty and forbidding manner. "His friends are satisfied with him as he is." Color was rising in her face and it was apparent she was on the verge of what Rainbow knew as her "tantrums."

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When these were on the horizon Rainbow preferred to take shelter. It rather gloried in Lydia's tantrums. Persons who have never lived in a community like Rainbow have no idea how far a young person like Lydia can go, nor what it means to be the Lydia Canfield of such a town. . . . Mrs. Bowen made no rejoinder; rather, she changed the subject abruptly.

"Hear about Clara Reynolds?" she asked generally of the assemblage.

"Sick?"

"Married. Her and John Fritch was married secret in Lansing yestiddy."

"John Fritch!" exclaimed Lydia. "You don't mean that young man at the hotel!"

"Him and no other," said Mrs. Bowen impressively.

"What in the world can Clara have been thinking of? Why, nobody knows anything about this Mr. Fritch. He's a foreigner or something, isn't he? And somebody told me his father was a circus performer."

"So they say."

Lydia shook her head. "It doesn't seem possible. How a girl can marry a man like that, with no family—who has queer people like circus performers or actors or something, I can't see. Why, the Reynolds family is related to Governor Wing, and Mrs. Reynolds was a Chadwick."

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"Folks forgets ancestry when they fall in love," said Mrs. Pratt.

"They ought not to. If you have good family it's your duty to keep it good—just as much as it's your duty to keep your hands clean, or to keep from doing anything you're ashamed of."

Mrs. Pratt bridled; she was notoriously lacking in family tree. "Some folks seems willin' enough to make friends with folks that don't brag much about fam'ly," she said acidly.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Pratt?" asked Lydia, immediately on her dignity.

"I mean you and Angus Burke. I guess he don't say much about his ancestors, does he? Don't brag none about his father. But you're ready enough to be friends with him—and to shove him down folks' throats by invitin' him to your party. Guess I wouldn't talk so much about Clara Reynolds."

Lydia turned away her head. Unconsciously Mrs. Pratt had touched upon an open sore which Lydia had sought to conceal even from herself. For months past Angus Burke had been growing in importance to Lydia Canfield; assuming a larger place in her life and her consciousness. She had fought to suppress him, to exclude him from her thoughts, because she considered he was unworthy to occupy so large a place in her meditations, but he remained. . . . Last night

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had been a sort of culmination, an exclamation point at the end of a sentence calling the attention of the reader to what had gone before, setting it forth more starkly. She had gone to sleep thinking of Angus—breathlessly, apprehensively. She had been frightened, yet she refused to make any admissions to herself. She told herself there were no admissions to make, except that Angus Burke was using up too much of her thinking time. Yet, withal, she had the sensation of being dragged, pushed, hurried against her will to some destination, and she was afraid of what she did not understand. . . . She was far from realizing that she desired Angus Burke as the one man necessary to the perfection of her future. She would have refuted the suggestion with scorn, but, nevertheless, lurking in the subconscious depths of her mind was something very like it—and she dared not peer deeper to see if it were so. . . . Side by side with this subconsciousness, repressed knowledge, crowding it back, endeavoring to strangle it, was the thought of Angus Burke's parentage, of his dreadful, criminal father; his squalid, degraded mother. . . . Strangely, but perhaps naturally to one of her vigorous character, she did not consider Angus's own past, his killing of a man, his imprisonment and trial. Those things were negligible—his parentage was everything. In

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this she differed from Rainbow. . . . Had anyone hinted to her of a possible marriage between herself and Angus Burke, such a one would have forfeited her friendship forever, and in the process would have heard words and phrases calculated to put him in his place forever. . . . In the light of reason such a *dénouement* seemed monstrous, impossible.

Now, as if a cold hand had been placed upon her back, she came face to face with a fact and could not evade it. The sensation she had just experienced, when Mrs. Bowen had planned a romance between Angus and Myrtle Cuyler, had been jealousy! She knew in this appalling moment that she had been jealous last night when her guest had admired Angus so heartily and praised him so generously. . . . It shocked her, terrified her. It was a thing she could not reason with in that crowded place; a thing requiring seclusion, a thing requiring clear thinking and resolution. . . . And, as these matters came to vex her, she had a vision of Angus himself. He came to overshadow all other reflections as she saw him as he had stood before her the night before, tall, dignified, seemly, in appearance more as a gentleman should be than any of her accepted friends. She saw him rising to emergencies, more than one of them, as a gentleman should rise to an emergency. . . . Because the

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conduct was his, of whom she had not expected it, it was magnified in her eyes, made to appear more remarkable, finer, more admirable.

"Why," her mind whispered in a sort of agonized flutter for a means of escape, "why couldn't Angus have been somebody?" Then she took herself to task for asking such a question. What did it matter who he was? What could it be to her? She assured herself the whole discussion was negligible, but while she gave herself this assurance, she knew it was not, never could be negligible again.

Young Malcolm Crane came into the post office while Mrs. Pratt was speaking to Lydia. He walked to her side, tipped his hat, and somewhat cavalierly turned his back upon Mrs. Pratt.

"I see you survived the revels," he said smiling. "I thought you'd be here. That's why I came, for I haven't the least idea I'll get any mail."

Lydia was glad to have him there; he formed a bulwark between her and assembled Rainbow, between her and thoughts of Angus Burke. She was confident in Malcolm's selfishness and in its willingness and ability to exclude anybody else from a thing he wanted himself. . . . Malcolm Crane was a straw at which she clutched in the current which was sweeping her to disaster.

"I hope you enjoyed yourself," she said, will-

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ing to forget their quarrel of the night before. In other circumstances she might not have been so readily forgiving.

They turned toward the door and presently were walking down the street together. When they were alone, on a secluded side street, Malcolm assumed a somber bearing, one of melancholy dignity, tinged with tragedy.

"Lydia," he said, "I—I want to speak to you about something. I've got to speak to you. . . . A year ago I—told you I loved you, and you were angry with me. I don't know why. There isn't anything wrong about loving a girl that I can see—anything she should take offense at." He stopped and studied her face, which she turned toward him and then quickly turned away. She was not angry, he saw, as she had been before, and from this he drew hope.

"I'm going back to college in a few days, and then it will be a long time before I see you again. . . . Won't you marry me? Won't you tell me before I go away that you'll be my wife—when I graduate?"

After a moment of hesitation she replied coldly, "I don't want to marry anybody, Malcolm. I haven't any idea of getting married, so don't speak about it any more. . . . I'm not going to marry for years."

"I haven't a fair chance," Malcolm com-

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plained. "I have to be away most of the year, and you'll forget all about me. While I'm gone somebody else will come along—and you'll marry him."

"There's no need to complain to me about that," said Lydia. "I don't send you away to college." Her irritation began to arise at the note of self-pity in Malcolm's voice. "You go to school of your own accord, and I'm sure I never asked you to fall in love with me."

"If you should fall in love with somebody else while I'm gone, I don't know what I'd do."

"You'd do nothing at all," she said sharply.

They had turned again on to Main Street and were passing the bank. Malcolm saw Angus Burke standing inside in conversation with a customer. . . . Immediately he became savage, vindictive, made so first by Lydia's conduct, but principally by the sight of the boy he had been taught by his father to hate.

"It might even be that Burke," he said unwisely, "the way you have him around all the time."

For once Lydia controlled herself, or perhaps she was so angry that no adequate outbreak was possible. She spoke quietly. "Malcolm," she said, "it's none of your business who I marry. Right at this minute, I'd a thousand times rather marry Angus Burke than you. He's a better

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gentleman than you'll ever know how to be." She stopped, stamped her foot, and her self-control began to slip.

"Angus Burke is a gentleman," she said, "and I like him and I'm proud of him. . . . I don't know but I *would* marry him if he should ask me, so there!" Then she finished, lips white, eyes flashing, "Why shouldn't I?"

Malcolm was as angry as she, and anger gave him courage. "Because he's the son of a pauper and a thief. He's a criminal, and just because he's fooling people now, don't think he can keep it up. The day will come when he'll see the inside of a jail again, because it's in his blood. . . . Go ahead. Marry him if you want to, and see how you'll like it. . . . *You* with all your talk about family and ancestors. . . . If you had any children they'd be proud of their father's ancestors, wouldn't they?" He stopped suddenly, frightened by what he had said, by this inadvertent allusion to future children, a matter to which Rainbow does not allude.

Lydia clutched her skirt with both hands, her fingers crushed the fabric. She was a picture of fury, and Malcolm drew back a step in real fear lest she should strike him. She could have struck him, trampled him at that moment. . . . She did not move. Then, suddenly, terrifyingly, she began to sob, great, deep, rending sobs!

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"I'll marry him if I want to," she cried. "I'll marry him if I want to. . . . I don't care—who he is—or what—he does. . . . I'd marry him in a prison cell if I wanted him."

Though she was a young woman of dignified years and marriageable age, she turned swiftly, gathered up her skirts, and ran toward home as fast as she could fly, sobbing as she went. Malcolm stood dumbly, staring after her.

Lydia ran until her strength deserted her midway up the hill. There she stopped an instant, dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief, and continued at a more decorous pace. Home appeared to her a harbor of refuge. There she could hide, there she could steal away to her own room, lock the door and shut out all the world. . . . Not stopping to remove her hat, she threw herself on the bed and ground her face into the coverlet—ground it so there was actual pain. . . . It was welcome pain.

When your ordinary girl first realizes the possibility, the possible imminence, of giving herself into the keeping of a definite man, she does so with pleasure. There may be trepidation, conventional fears, tremblings, but there is also joy. . . . Lydia Canfield felt only a numbing horror. . . .

She did not search her heart to discover if she loved Angus Burke. For the time that aspect

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of the matter was laid aside. All that was apparent to her was the dreadful possibility of a Canfield being hurried by mysterious forces into marriage with a Burke; the scandalous thought of a girl in her position smirching herself and her family by mating with a man of Angus Burke's antecedents, his degraded parentage.

"I sha'n't. . . . I sha'n't. . . . I sha'n't . . ." she muttered fiercely, repeating it again and again. "I sha'n't marry him. I'll never see him again. . . . Never. . . . Never. . . . Never. . . ."

CHAPTER TWENTY

IT was in the succeeding spring that Chet Bowen died, and his wife found satisfaction in a funeral whose carriages extended almost from the home to the graveyard. He was buried in a black suit which made him look somehow unnatural, for his natural color was a drab rustiness. . . . Mr. Woodhouse, instead of hiring an experienced man from the city, promoted Angus to the cashier's position in Chet's place, and elevated Gene Goff to be a species of bookkeeper-assistant, to look after a great deal of the petty detail which had occupied Bowen. Another bookkeeper was brought in, and in this way Angus was given time to continue as Mr. Woodhouse's personal representative, as well as to undertake duties in the bank which never had been entrusted to his predecessor. For Mr. Woodhouse had marked qualities in Angus which made him valuable to the old man, qualities of level-headed common sense, of acute perception, of initiative. . . . Angus was by way of becoming Rainbow's most important financial person-

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age—in the sense of operating the largest bit of financial machinery. When we consider Angus's age this state of affairs may be regarded as extraordinary. There are few cashiers who have only passed their majority, but Angus was many years older than the tale of his birthdays—and many years younger.

Henry G. Woodhouse had reached that time of life when it was inevitable he should look forward to a day when Rainbow would know him no more. His years were beginning to weigh upon him. No longer could he bring to his endeavors the enthusiasm and acumen which had once been his; he discovered that fatigue stalked his path and that constant attendance at the office irked him. He longed for rest and knew a craving for leisure. All these things contributed to Angus Burke's advancement. Daily the old gentleman shifted more from his shoulders to the younger man's, and his confidence in his youthful assistant was remarkable, yet not so remarkable when one perceives how natural it is for age to lean upon the sturdiness of youth. Had Angus been unscrupulous, self-seeking, he might have obtained a sinister influence over the old gentleman—the sort of influence Judge Crane and his family accused him of exercising.

Judge Crane had approached Mr. Woodhouse upon the subject of taking his son into the bank

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upon his graduation from college—making the error of letting it appear that, in his opinion, young Malcolm should begin as soon as possible to learn to husband the fortune which was to be his upon Mr. Woodhouse's death. He went away with the sort of flea in his ear which Henry G. was so capable of placing when he deemed the moment required it. . . . And Judge Crane's fear of Angus's influence fanned his hatred of the boy to fresh heat. . . .

Sometimes Mr. Woodhouse would absent himself from the office for days at a time; sometimes he would look in once or twice during the day. . . . He was satisfied, but, what is of more importance to Angus Burke, Rainbow was growing satisfied, too. It had tested his mettle. It had known the touch of his ability, and gradually it was not only becoming accustomed to him, but, in a business way, was commencing to give him its respect. . . . So Henry G. was able to spend much of his time in his library or in driving about the countryside behind the finest team in Rainbow—for of automobiles he would have none. His position was enviable, even if it was arrived at so late in life. He was learning to enjoy what remained to him of his years. . . . Not every man finds an assistant so dependable as to make this pleasant state of affairs possible. . . .

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In the early summer of that year Mr. Woodhouse prepared to make an extended trip in the East—combining business and pleasure, and Angus was to be left alone, in sole authority for a matter of six weeks.

“I want to rest and to play,” said Mr. Woodhouse. “I want to forget all about Rainbow and business and mortgages and loans. While I am in Boston I shall stay at a modest, inconspicuous hotel, and nobody excepting yourself shall have my address. I don’t care what comes up—no matter who it concerns nor how important it is—don’t trouble me with it. I depend upon you, Angus. . . . At this season it is scarcely likely anything of great importance will arise, but if it does, exercise your own judgment and tell me about it when I get home.”

“Very well, sir,” said Angus. “I’ll try to manage.”

Mingling with men, with strangers on business errands from the outside world, and, in a limited degree, with the younger folks of Rainbow, had loosened somewhat Angus’s tongue. He did not speak so slowly, with that appearance of phlegm, of stolid thinking which had once been characteristic of him. His ideas took form in words more readily; his speech was more facile.

“There is one matter I have waited to speak

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about," he said. "I do not know that it will come up while you are away, but it may prove embarrassing. . . . Judge Crane is borrowing money." He paused a moment to await Mr. Woodhouse's comment.

"I know, I've heard something of it. He's rather mysterious about it."

"I think I know what he is doing," Angus said. "He will want more money . . . a great deal more money, I believe."

Mr. Woodhouse waited for Angus to elucidate.

"He believes," said Angus, "he has discovered oil. You know there has always been footless talk of oil in this valley . . . because we have all seen oil floating in colored patches on the river. Sometimes if you stir the mud with a stick this oil will arise and spread. . . . People have said there must be oil, but nobody has ever tried to find out."

"Yes. Naturally I have heard. . . . I have noticed this oily scum which floats on the water—iridescent patches that undoubtedly smell of petroleum. . . . Crane may be right."

"He seems," said Angus, "to be going ahead before he knows whether or not he is right. . . . It was Bishwhang gave me a hint of what the Judge is up to—Bishwhang heard some talk between Judge Crane and a stranger who was

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here a few days back—evidently an expert who came to investigate.”

“And Crane, I assume, is buying property with a view to becoming another Rockefeller.”

“Buying and optioning.”

“And borrowing money.”

“Yes. . . . We have his note for two thousand dollars—unsecured. Then there are other collateral loans.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Woodhouse thoughtfully, “I loaned that money to Malcolm because he was Malcolm. A personal matter. I never figured it as good business. You understand, of course.”

“I understand. . . . But Judge Crane will need more money, I am sure. If he comes to me, what shall I do?”

Mr. Woodhouse regarded Angus fixedly for a moment before replying. It would have been interesting to read his thoughts, but those he kept to himself. “You will know the circumstances better than I. Perhaps you have made some investigations. If the matter arises exercise your own judgment, forgetting that Judge Crane differs in any respect from other customers of this bank.”

Two days later Mr. Woodhouse left for Boston. Angus was left behind, properly empowered to transact any business which might appear either for the bank or for his employer.

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. . . It was an unusual display of trust. To Dave Wilkins it was the proudest day of his life.

Already rumors of Judge Crane's subterranean activities were afloat in Rainbow. The post office knew he was up to something, but could not discover what; knew he was taking options on property up the river, buying outright farms whose owners were suspicious of options. It required a great deal of money. . . . There were those who claimed the Judge represented an incoming railway and was securing rights of way; others took the stand that His Honor was in possession of some sort of information which would boom land values, and was preparing for the event; others, more astute, held that he had discovered coal, or iron or gold. . . . Very few, indeed, guessed petroleum.

The Judge was close-mouthed, mysterious. He realized he excited curiosity, and, even though his aim was secrecy, he made such a parade of it as a man of his character would make, delighting in the sensation he caused. He dearly loved to be in the public eye and on the public tongue.

The second week after Mr. Woodhouse's departure, the Judge walked into the bank and passed directly into Angus Burke's room without the formality of knocking. He uttered no word of greeting or courtesy, but drew from his

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pocket a promissory note which he tossed on Angus's desk.

"I want fifteen hundred dollars," he said, as an autocrat issuing a command to a slave.

Angus picked up the slip of paper, held it in his fingers for a moment, and studied it before replying. He turned it over, observing that there was no endorser.

"You want to borrow fifteen hundred dollars?" he asked.

"You heard me say so."

Angus turned his chair and looked up at the Judge. "Will you be so good as to give me a list of the sums you have borrowed elsewhere within the past two months—and of your various liabilities and assets. A complete financial statement."

"It's none of your business what I've borrowed. All you have to do with the matter is to loan the money I ask. I don't want any impertinence from you."

Angus's face was expressionless. "We already have your unsecured note for two thousand dollars," he said.

Judge Crane bristled with rage. "Where is Mr. Woodhouse?" he demanded hoarsely. "I wonder what he's thinking of to leave a whipper-snapper like you to be insolent to customers?"

"Mr. Woodhouse left me in charge of the

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bank," Angus said calmly. "You will have to deal with me."

"I demand to know where he is."

"I'm sorry, but I cannot tell you."

"Burke," blustered the Judge, "I'll have you out of here for this, you——"

"We will discuss the matter of this loan," Angus said concisely. "You already have, as I said, an unsecured note with us for two thousand dollars. Now, without security or endorsements, you ask for fifteen hundred more. . . . As a lawyer you know that is not business. Banks do not loan that way."

"There was no difficulty about the first loan," Crane said, glaring at Angus.

"That loan was asked and granted on the ground of relationship. There was no business in it. . . . This is a different matter. I am not empowered to make friendly loans, nor loans of sentiment."

"Then give me Mr. Woodhouse's address."

Angus disregarded the question. "If you bring me adequate security I will be glad to advance this money. Either that or a satisfactory endorser."

"Why, you—you young—— You know my son will own this business some day. . . . You know . . ."

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"I know Mr. Woodhouse owns it to-day. I know what he expects of me."

"I know what he *should* expect of you," Crane burst out with venom. "If he weren't getting into his second childhood he would never leave you—scum like you—with money to handle. Your father was a thief and you——"

Angus stood up quickly. Crane failed to finish his sentence.

"You must not speak to me like that," Angus said with something of his old-time manner. "You must not call me names—you nor anybody else. . . . I've told your son—he knows. You have been against me always. . . . I don't know why. . . . But you must not call me names—ever again."

"I—I—you young . . ."

Angus advanced a step. He spoke calmly now, so calmly that Crane fell into grievous error. The chill of fear, that relic of his childhood passed away from him. He was perturbed, but master of himself.

"You must not speak to me as you have. . . . *Here* I am not Angus Burke, but Mr. Woodhouse's representative . . . cashier of this bank. You must remember. . . . You must have respect for Mr. Woodhouse."

"I have respect enough for Mr. Woodhouse," Judge Crane snarled; then, mistaking Angus's

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quiet for a sign of weakness or lack of courage, he went on, "But you—don't forget who you are. . . . A nobody and worse. You ought to be in prison. . . ."

Angus's face went gray, his jaw protruded and set, and his eyes smouldered with a dangerous light. He clutched the Judge's shoulders, jerking the man toward him, close to him. His face was menacing. . . . Angus Burke was on the point of losing control of himself. . . .

"Stop!" he said chokingly. "Be still. . . . I won't have it. . . . You——"

Crane struggled to free himself, but Angus was the stronger; as he was powerful enough to hold the man's body, so his spirit was strong enough to hold the man's eyes, to dominate him, to intimidate him. . . . Suddenly he recovered himself, on the verge, as it were, and pushed the Judge away from him as one who fights off a temptation. He sat down in his chair. "You understand. . . . It's not safe. . . . I don't want to hurt you—or anybody. . . ." Then he breathed deeply once. "If you want to talk business now, all right. But don't mention Angus Burke. . . ."

The boy continued to stare into the Judge's face; Crane's eyes fell, his knees felt queerly weak. He was cowed. . . . Angus picked up the note again and held it out.

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"I cannot let you have this money without security," he said, as though nothing had intervened since the matter of the loan was first mentioned.

Crane paced up and down, striving to recover himself. He was impressed, subdued, but his rage and hatred burned the hotter for his subjection, his humiliation. The man was able to see that here he had to do with a strength finer, more securely fortified, more admirable than his own; he knew that his will had been mastered by a more powerful will. . . . Presently he spoke sullenly.

"My house," he said. "How much on first mortgage?"

"Twenty-five hundred dollars."

It was difficult for Crane to speak at all—now he could only nod in assent.

"I will have the papers drawn," Angus said. "Will you come in, with Mrs. Crane, to sign this afternoon?"

"Yes," Crane jerked out. He turned and stamped to the door, exhibiting what discourtesy he dared venture as he stood for a moment on the threshold glaring at Angus. He opened his mouth to speak, thought better of it, and went out slamming the door after him.

Angus gripped his hands together when he was alone, and shut his eyes. His face was gray

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—he was remembering . . . remembering! Yet even then he could question himself, and the question he asked, the answer he demanded of himself was if he had dealt fairly in this matter; if his own prejudice had swayed him; if the insults to himself had moved him to act as Mr. Woodhouse would not have acted had he been present. . . . He was able to reply that he had dealt with Judge Crane as he would have dealt with a stranger, justly and fairly. It was a matter in which he was entitled to find satisfaction, yet he found none. Angus was not one given to self-congratulation.

Perhaps an hour later Gene Goff knocked on the door, and had to knock a second time to make himself heard.

"Man wants to see you," he said, twitching at his necktie and craning his neck to look over Angus's shoulder into a small mirror. "He let on it was about investments or suthin'."

Angus went into the main banking office and perceived an individual, evidently an artisan, patently a character of sorts, who leaned in happy-go-lucky attitude against the wall.

"Did you want to see me?" Angus asked.

"If you're Money I do. . . . If you're Capital I yearn to see you. I itch to chat with Finance."

Angus sniffed the air; it was not innocent of the odor of intoxicants.

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"I am the cashier," he said. "What do you want?"

"I," said the stranger, "am an inventor." He stretched his arm at full length before him and pointed a long, eloquent finger at his chest. "An inventor. I furnish brains, ingenuity, the raw materials of fortune . . . somebody else supplies the money. Comprehensible, eh?"

"No," said Angus characteristically.

"I have invented no less than fourteen articles, devices and mechanisms—whatever you call 'em. All to be manufactured from wood, from the trees of the forest. I have invented boons for the housewife, aids for the merchant, doo-dards for the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. The world needs them. It cannot get along without them. . . . But an invention, young man, is like a keg of—er—amber beverage without a—what-d'ye-call-it—a bung-starter. There's no way of making use of it. Clear now?"

"Not yet," said Angus.

"In words of one syllable, then, I have the inventions, duly patented and protected by statutes in such case made and provided." The man smiled slyly, but with a certain charm and shook his head with a boyishly self-satisfied air. "Oh, they're patented, and nobody can gouge 'em out of me. I'm looking for capital to manufac-

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ture 'em. Are you Capital, and will you build me a factory and supply the sinews of war? That, young friend, is what I'm getting at."

Angus considered. One never discovered opportunities by refusing investigation. People made money by manufacturing novelties. He studied the man again briefly.

"I'll look," he said.

The man swayed back and forth, and then he grinned—after which he threw back his head and laughed, and the laughter was pleasant, infectious. "Young feller," he said, "if you don't spend money faster'n you talk I'll be gray-haired and wobbly before I git a cent. . . . But I sort of cotton to your looks. Open up your door, Mr. Money, and I'll show you the thingumbobs."

For an hour Angus was occupied with the man, examining his ingenuities, listening to his drolleries. At the end of that time he said, "A factory would benefit Rainbow. I think you have things which would sell. . . . Go talk to Dave Wilkins." That was all; no promises—no false hopes extended. Yet the inventor was satisfied.

"Son," said Mr. Verry, for that was the man's name, "folks has to do a sight of minin' in you 'fore they git to mineral, but I calc'late when they hit a nugget it's eighteen-carat fine."

Angus looked after the departing man with a hint of a smile on his lips. He was beginning

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to understand the uses of humor. Indeed, during the past half year he was learning to laugh. It was an accomplishment in which Dave Wilkins delighted.

"That's all he needs now," Dave said to Browning. "If he can learn to laugh, he's going to come out on top."

For a man who seldom made use of laughter himself, Dave Wilkins set a high value on the commodity.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

WHEN workmen were imported and drilling operations actually began on one of the farms bought by Judge Crane, Rainbow became as nearly hysterical as it is possible for a solid, unemotional middle-western village to be. Men who had sold their farms walked up and down the land bewailing their luck; the post office talked of nothing else; the entire community poised on its toes, as it were, waiting for oil to flow—and in the interim, folks took to regarding Crane as a great man and a financial genius! They had always seen it in him. From childhood he had carried marks of future greatness. All this created an atmosphere exceedingly pleasing to Crane. He basked in the sunlight of public adulation; verged on pomposity; dressed himself in the airs of a busy capitalist. Visions of wealth exhibited themselves before his eyes—of a wealth which should be his alone—all his. Not one foot of ground, not one share in his enterprise would he part with. It was his idea to demonstrate oil and then sell to the Standard.

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His options, obtained from men little versed in business, ran for extraordinary periods. . . . In this way it was possible for him to take the necessary time to prove the existence of oil before being obliged to pay the large sums necessary to obtain the fee to much of the property he had contracted to acquire. And he was positive he could sell these options before they expired. With, say, twenty-five thousand dollars expended in options one can control a large tract of land. . . .

By hook or by crook he had secured money in excess of this amount. Everything he owned was pledged, hypothecated. His personal credit was rather more than exhausted. Perhaps, of all the inhabitants of Rainbow, Angus Burke alone knew how Judge Crane had strained himself—how precarious was his footing. Angus had analyzed the speculation, saw how the whole matter dangled by a hair and how thin was the hair. As it appeared to Angus, Crane had wagered a matter of twenty-five thousand dollars that oil would be found in sufficient quantities—and he knew Crane could not lose twenty-five thousand dollars. He had not that sum to lose. Therefore, in the event of a crash, somebody else would have to bear the major portion of the loss. He saw to it that the bank should not suffer—and when approached for advice by sundry citi-

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zens he had given it to such account that Crane's animosity expanded and multiplied.

This can be said for Crane: He believed in his project; was honestly convinced of its soundness. Two months after taking his first option he could have incorporated and sold out to his fellow-townsmen at a profit. He refused to do so. In proportion as he clung to his holdings, his reputation grew; he was lost sight of as a lawyer, a judge; was seen only as a financial colossus. . . .

Drilling began in July. Angus watched the operations almost breathlessly, realizing what would follow a failure to strike oil. . . . Also he knew that drilling for oil required money. What if Crane's capital gave out before anything was achieved?

One morning he was discussing the matter with Dave Wilkins in the printing shop. It was not Angus's custom to talk of the matter publicly—one of his most pronounced virtues was his close-mouthedness, but Dave Wilkins was his father—was still his god. To Dave he could speak of anything—except himself and certain matters which were hidden in the secret fastnesses of his heart.

"The Judge," he said, "has overbalanced himself. The thing has gone to his head. . . . Other people's money . . ."

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"He'll be all right if they strike oil," said Dave.

Angus shook his head. "I'm not so sure. I've been studying the oil business. . . . I've read everything I can find that touches it, and I'm not sure. I believe there is oil."

"You believe there is oil! . . . I thought it was your idea that Crane was doctoring up a swindle."

"Yes, but oil and oil *enough* are two different matters. If he should get a quart it would set Rainbow crazy. . . . What Crane will do if he finds oil—but only a dribble of it, is what I'm worrying about."

"I see," said Wilkins. "I see."

"He's keeping his operations so secret. If only I could find out at the right time what has happened."

"What happens will happen, Angus. What is it to you?"

Angus regarded Dave gravely. "I—couldn't see folks who have labored so hard for a little money—robbed of it."

"But you owe nothing to Rainbow." Dave said this tentatively. "Rainbow has shown you slight kindness."

"I—I mustn't think about that. I mustn't think about myself. I must—only think about them."

Dave smiled but did not reply. But he was

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thinking—thinking, “And this is the boy they called jailbird and wouldn’t tolerate. This is the boy they wouldn’t let go to school with their children!” To Angus he said, “Come over to-night. We’ll thrash it out. Maybe the paper can help.”

Angus went out slowly. As he crossed the street he saw Lydia Canfield approaching. She saw him, stopped, and beckoned. He was surprised, for she had avoided him these many months. Her resolution not to see him, to speak with him, had been well kept, and now—one had to shrug one’s shoulders. Did she feel a confidence in herself, or had her resolution broken down? It was impossible to read Lydia as one reads a book.

“Angus,” she said abruptly, “I want you to go to Deal with me to-morrow.”

She took him by surprise, nonplussed him.

“Deal!” he said. “To-morrow!”

“Yes. . . . We’ll take the early train and be back here at nine o’clock in the evening.”

“But——”

“I’m going. I’ve made up my mind. . . . It’s circus day. Three of the girls were going with me, and we were going to have heaps of fun. There’s never any fun here. We were going to take Mary Browning along for chaperon—and now she says she can’t go—and she says I

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mustn't go if she doesn't. . . . I'm twenty years old, Angus Burke—and I won't be treated that way. I'm going for all of Mary Browning or anybody else. . . . Will you go with me?" This last was not so much a request as a command.

Angus hesitated. The position was difficult and he did not know what to say nor how to say it. It was obvious to him he must refuse, but how to do so without ungraciousness, without angering Lydia, was an unanswerable problem. . . . He knew well Lydia's temper, and the willfulness of her.

"I—I couldn't go, Lydia," he said uneasily. "You know Mrs. Browning would go—if she could. She would. . . . She knows best. I—don't you see you oughtn't to go—and I oughtn't to take you when she says not?"

"Bosh! . . . I won't be bossed like that. I can go if I want to. You can get away from the bank if you want to."

"I—I could get away." Honesty compelled him to admit this. He could not take refuge in an untrue excuse that business would hold him.

"Then be ready for the early train. I'll come right to the depot. . . . I've never been to a big circus and—and we'll have a picnic." She was excited as a child. "I'll show folks they can't drive me all the time."

"But, Lydia—you—you *can't* go. It wouldn't

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be right. . . . And if you went with me, folks would talk. . . . I mustn't go with you—don't you see?"

She was thoroughly angry now, angry with Angus as well as with Mary Browning. "I don't see. . . . I'm not a baby. Whose business is it where I go, or with whom?"

"Mrs. Browning knows best," said Angus weakly.

"Mrs. Browning doesn't know a bit more than I do. . . . Will you go with me, or won't you?"

Her tone was sharp; it aroused Angus to an appreciation of the thing as it was. For the moment he saw Lydia as a petulant, willful little girl, felt his own age and maturity—the superiority of the adult over the child. He did not hesitate now but spoke firmly.

"No, Lydia, I can't go with you."

"You can't—you mean you won't! Very well, do as you like. I never asked you to do anything for me before, and you may depend on it, I shall never ask you again. . . . I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure. It's a pleasant and courteous and gentlemanly thing to refuse a girl's request without any reason, isn't it? Well, you can stay at home, Angus Burke, or you can go to China, for all I care. . . . I'm going, and I'm going alone."

They had been walking up the street, and now turned the corner toward Craig Browning's

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house. Lydia stopped. "You needn't go any farther," she said coldly.

Angus halted; then he fixed his eyes on her and for the first time in his life he spoke in an important moment without carefully reflecting on what he said.

"You mustn't go alone," he said. "You mustn't . . . I don't want you to."

Lydia gasped, looked at Angus in astonishment that was not simulated. The red mounted to her cheeks as it was wont to do before an outburst.

"You—you don't want me to! *You!*"

Angus was frightened by his own words momentarily, but that feeling passed. He found himself calm, almost serene; he felt his will to be superior to Lydia's, and it was borne in upon him that he had a duty to perform. This very frequently happens to serious-minded young folks.

"I don't want you to go," he repeated slowly, "and you mustn't go. I—— It wouldn't be right. You won't go."

"I won't go!"

"No. . . . Look at me now, Lydia. You're unreasonable. You're angry. If you go—you'll be sorry for it—because—because you're not the sort of girl who—does that kind of a thing. . . . What would people think?"

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"What is it to you?" she gasped, choking with anger.

What was it to him? What *was* it to him? He stopped, almost drew back from her physically, for as he looked down into her rebellious eyes he knew what it was to him, knew he loved her, recognized at last that he had loved her and would continue to love her—that she was the beginning and the end of things for him, to be worshiped until death!

For the second time he spoke without weighing his words, this time from the depths of his heart. The words were not greatly significant—would not have been from another but Angus; it was his tone which was significant, eloquently, unconsciously significant.

"It—it means a great deal to me," he said.

Lydia understood. Her anger gave place to something else; to something she could not analyze. In it was something of fear of Angus Burke, of shame, of distrust of herself, of astonishment—but back of it all was a warmth of gladness, an uprush of gladness—a joy which frightened her while it made her happy, a joy of which she was ashamed. . . . Events had forced her to think of the possibility of loving Angus Burke, to a point beyond thinking of this possibility—but, strangely, never had she considered the point of Angus Burke loving her!

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. . . Suddenly she knew she had feared for months that he would not love her, that she was negligible to him. . . . For a moment she lost herself, basked in the happiness of it—was glad—glad he had unconsciously confessed his love. Somehow it was different from a formal confession, more excusable—that is the way she put it. A direct proposal from him would have affronted her—her inhibitions would have forced her to be affronted. Her pride would have aroused her—a Canfield—to resentment at a proffer of love from him—a Burke. But this was different, accidental, unpremeditated, excusable. It was as though she had discovered for herself a thing he chose to keep secret.

Angus, too, was conscious of the significance of his words; wondered in fear if Lydia understood the disclosure—feared that her acuteness could not mistake it. . . . No sooner had the knowledge of his love come to him than, following close upon it, came the certainty that it must be in vain. Lydia Canfield was not for him, never could be for him. . . . He clenched his hands behind him.

Lydia did not speak—she scrutinized the sidewalk, lifted her eyes to Angus's and dropped them again. She was agitated. The trip to Deal was forgotten. . . . It had been swallowed up in something infinitely more portentous, more

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demanding. . . . It was Angus who spoke first, spoke out of his distress and confusion, out of his dismay. . . .

"You won't go," he said. "You mustn't go. . . ."

Lydia did not reply. If she had spoken she would have sobbed. Her agitation was pitiful, would have been pitiful if one could have penetrated the disguise of her self-control to peer into her heart and her mind. It had come suddenly to Lydia Canfield that she was marching under orders to face the crisis of her life.

"Good-by, Angus," she said gently.

"Good-by, Lydia," he said, understanding her, that she wanted to be alone, to hide. "Good-by, Lydia." Again and unconsciously his tone was a caress.

He walked with dragging steps to the bank; went through the outer office to his little private room without a word to Gene Goff or his assistant, and closed the door after him. There he sat down before his desk, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and stared at the wall before him. . . . He loved Lydia Canfield! In this he sensed disaster and sought to reason the matter out—as men have vainly endeavored to reason out such matters since the dawn of time. . . . Until this day love had been a foreign emotion to him; his awareness of it had been purely liter-

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ary—even now he scarcely comprehended it. . . . So, according to his custom and his nature, he tried to reason it out, to get to the bottom of it, to catalogue and to place it in its appropriate pigeonhole.

Yet, with all his bewilderment and travail, he was conscious that he was glad. This love, unasked, had brought a joy into his life, a joy of a magnitude and brightness such as he had not dreamed life capable of holding. . . . It made Angus more human. He could feel a vital change taking place in himself—felt the magic working of the philosopher's stone. As he sat in the presence of his love, he discovered that the world and its business were more understandable to him than ever before—he was able better to comprehend the actions of mankind, to perceive motives which had been hidden from him. . . . From the fog of events he seemed to look forward to a future which held out some sort of glowing promise—but he could not see the features of it. . . . Hitherto his future had appeared to him as nothing but a stretch of years: Now it was a living, vibrating possibility to be awaited with anticipation, a something to await with joy or with sorrow; a something which forced into his life an object and made living worth his while. . . . The fact of the matter

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was that in that hour Angus Burke knew his real birth—he began to live.

He thought of Lydia—thrilled joyously as she entered his mind. To this point his musings had been pleasurable. Now, suddenly, he understood that love is a craving, a hunger for a definite individual, a ravenous demand for a supplement to one's self—a craving which, unsatisfied, fed on itself and was capable of bringing grief or even despair. . . .

Love, he comprehended, was a forerunner of marriage, a moving cause of marriage. It urged on to that end, was Nature's force which drove mankind to mating. He had never thought of marriage clearly; had never asked himself why one man selected for his wife a certain woman instead of any woman. . . . Now it was clear, sharply, painfully clear.

He loved Lydia Canfield! . . . Love! . . . Marriage! . . .

"I can never have her," he said to himself. "Never. . . ."

He compared himself to her, compared her life with his life, nor could he drive his imagination to see his future in intimate contact with Lydia's. It was unthinkable. He remembered Lydia's pronouncements on the subject of family; remembered how she revered blood and ancestry—how she had scorned the Reynolds girl for

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marrying John Fritch . . . and Fritch had nothing against him except that he was a nobody. John Fritch's father had been honest; his mother had not been depraved—John Fritch himself had never killed a man, nor been behind the bars of a common jail. . . .

Angus set his jaw. "I'll never . . . speak of it . . . to her," he said. "I'll—hide it. . . ."

Countless young men, doubtless, have made the same declaration. As well seek to hide a sunset!

Next day Angus waited with ill-concealed impatience to learn if Lydia went to Deal. It was, somehow, a matter of gravest importance to him. . . . Without knowing it, hope persisted in Angus Burke's heart. . . . Hope always lingers. . . .

Lydia did not go to Deal.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

EVENTS have a way of moving with such sluggishness that their motion is all but imperceptible—of so moving until they seem to gather impetus with startling suddenness for a momentous onrush to some predestined objective. There is a subtility and finesse about it, a patent effort on the part of fate to catch its object unaware and to hurl him forward to its purpose before he realizes he has been caught in the avalanche-rush. It was so now with events in Rainbow. For years they had crawled, had seemed at a standstill; but now the irresistible pressure had begun, and before it Angus Burke, Lydia Canfield, Judge Crane, Dave Wilkins—and others all but forgotten in the monotony of the drama—were being driven headlong to their several climaxes.

Verry, the eccentric, alcoholic, ingenious fisher in the stream of opportunity, was the puppet selected by circumstances to unloose forces of whose potentiality he did not dream, and which, without doubt, he never perceived.

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Verry was an opportunist, and so, perceiving the ascendancy of Judge Crane's star, he hitched his wagon to it, and while he did not totally ignore Angus, and while for purposes of valuable publicity he still clung to Dave Wilkins, he placed his main dependence upon Rainbow's financial giant. Crane, as was the nature of the man, was easily persuaded. The inventor's confidence in Crane's ability to call out money for investment in any project he chose to father at this time was not misplaced, for Rainbow set a high value on its Circuit Judge. It endowed him with the golden touch. He was reputed to be on the point of accepting an enormous sum from the Standard Oil Company for his land and options—and there were whispers of other mysterious and fortunate ventures whose exact character was unknown to Rainbow. . . . If there had not been other ventures in finance, how had he been able to produce so much ready money for his oil project? . . . This latter was a question which gave Angus Burke no little concern.

As for Crane, he was a man not to be envied, if the facts had been exhibited for appraisal. He was a worried man, a harried and vexed man. . . . This much may be said for him: He believed honestly in the presence of oil, and that a matter of weeks separated him from the wealth of which he dreamed. It was those intervening

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weeks that worried him. Money, money, money. Everywhere he turned were more insistent demands for ready cash—and he was rapidly approaching a moment when he would have no more cash to supply. He was a selfish man, a shortsighted man. At this time he could have had capital, not in abundance, for Rainbow was not wealthy, but in sufficient sums to carry on his work—but, according to his nature, he would not share. It was to be all his own, to him, and undivided. . . . Crane was honest—as men go—ready, perhaps, to strike a shrewd bargain, prepared to take advantage of opportunity in almost any guise, so long as it did not display too baldly the face of trickery—nevertheless it would have been unfair to the man, much as one might dislike him, to say at this date, that he was other than ordinarily honest. . . .

It was on the fifteenth of July that Judge Crane made formal announcement of the incorporation of the Rainbow Novelties Company, and opened its books for stock subscriptions. Verry was president of the new concern; Judge Crane its secretary-treasurer. . . . Nor was he disappointed in his ability to interest the village's hoarded capital. Rainbow, with an enthusiasm which was foreign to it, but which doubtless was due to the presence in epidemic form of the microbe of speculation, came forward enthusiasti-

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cally to put its money into the project in sums which ran all the way from one share at ten dollars to ten shares, or even a hundred shares. The price of the shares had been made low for a benevolent reason, or so Crane informed his neighbors—so that nobody in Rainbow need be barred from some participation in this new prosperity which was descending upon their town.

The first week of the financing saw twenty thousand dollars' worth of the new company's securities disposed of. The total amount of stock to be sold, by Crane's advice, was set at fifty thousand dollars instead of the twenty-five Verry had estimated to be necessary. It was like Crane—he was now a man who did things in a big way. . . . But even Angus Burke, under whose doubting and analytical eye a project must demonstrate itself to be of the soundest, had no word to utter against the Rainbow Novelties Company—indeed he invested a few hundred dollars, which represented his savings, in the stock. He went further, advising Henry G. Woodhouse to give the company his countenance, and, while awaiting his answer, a block of ten thousand dollars was set aside for him.

As the days passed it seemed that every man, woman, and child in Rainbow was destined to become a stockholder—that the Novelties Company was to be a real community project. Even

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farmers living at a distance, drove in with musty bills, or carefully kept and much-thumbed bank books, to make their small investments. . . .

Meantime operations up the river had been progressing steadily. Three wells were being sunk at suitable distances from each other, and each was devouring money with an avidity which frightened Judge Crane. The payroll was not small, materials were costly, the drain was constant and ever growing in volume. The man was coming rapidly to the bottom of his purse—and now, even had he been willing to admit Rainbow to his company, he could not have done so, for Rainbow had invested. Its savings were exhausted. Each Saturday Crane paid off his crew and knew fresh apprehensions. If they did not strike oil soon! . . . Oil, oil, oil! He urged on his men, driving, driving. . . . But your driller is not to be hurried. He has drilled before, will drill again. They know their business and go forward with the work in a more or less stolid manner, having no hazard in the result. Their daily wage was their sole concern. . . . If they struck oil—well and good—if not—it was a matter over which to shrug the shoulders.

And so Crane found himself in the position of many men before him who have sought to swing large projects with small capital. He was drawing nearer to the day when he would have

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to strike oil; when oil was an absolute necessity. It must gush—or disaster, waiting now in readiness, would seize him. It was a trying, racking position; more than once it has been found sufficiently strong to break down the barriers of strict honesty. When money must be had and none is forthcoming, the most virtuous of men will be no stranger to temptation.

Malcolm Crane was moving irresistibly toward that point.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

ONE staunch friend Angus Burke had among the younger residents of Rainbow: the gentle, lovable, womanly Myrtle Cuyler. From that night at Lydia Canfield's party when Angus's ready action and presence of mind had saved her from possible disfigurement, her loyalty to him had been of the sort which nothing could shake. In her presence, more than in that of any other young woman in Rainbow, Angus was able to feel at his ease.

So it was that when, toward the end of July, Myrtle stopped in his office to invite him to a small, informal party, he was embarrassed.

"There'll only be a few," said Myrtle. "You'll come, won't you? We're going to have tables in the yard—and a good time without any fussiness . . . only about a dozen."

More than ever Angus had avoided junior Rainbow since the day of his encounter with Lydia which had brought to his consciousness the appalling fact that he loved. . . . It was a fact which had tormented him. And the torment

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was less easy to bear because it was a matter about which he could speak to none—not even to Dave Wilkins. . . . It was a thing about which he could not talk; about which he had an uneasy feeling that it was a profanation to think. The boy was as greatly disturbed by the fact of his love as if he had committed a deliberate act of insult to Lydia. It was a morbid, unhealthy condition but, perhaps, not to be avoided. . . .

There were days when his will—such was its tension—seemed on the point of snapping, of releasing him to run to Lydia and to pour out in hot, excited words his confession. He imagined himself before her, could almost hear the incoherent outpouring of his words. . . . He could see her face—the repulsion of it, the disdain. . . . It shamed him, this weakness; he called himself unmanly to give way to the thing, to permit his love to dwell in his thoughts.

It must be borne in mind that Angus had lived a fifth of a century of repression: years of consciousness that he was not like other boys; years made harrowing by contempt, and by the attitude of Rainbow which had demanded he should be made an outcast. . . . Constant repression is constant tension. There had been a perpetual holding in; a pressure of self-expression outward, that, though he was not aware of it, had pushed and driven and worried the reinforce-

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ments of his will until it was inevitable there should come a day of outbreak. A spring in tension does one of two things: it dies, becomes inert, or it breaks its confinements. So it is with a man. If the man be weak, an hour comes at last when the spring of his will loses its strength, becomes lifeless and sodden; if the man be strong, and Angus Burke was strong, there will come a bursting out, a crushing through all restraints, a moment of supreme emotional urge which carries all inhibitions before it. . . . Vaguely Angus felt some such danger and lived in apprehension of it.

Because of these things, he did not want to accept Myrtle Cuyler's invitation—did not want to go to a place where he would inevitably be thrown with Lydia—yet the discourtesy of a refusal would be to affront the friendship which Myrtle so persistently tendered. . . . Even before he replied to her invitation she saw how agitated he was, how shaken—that something was preying upon him and making him unhappy. Evidences of a mental conflict were visible upon his face, so marked as to demand her sympathy.

"You'll come, won't you?" she urged, because she did not know what else to say.

"Yes," Angus nodded. "Thank you." He tried to smile.

"Angus," she said, hesitating to touch his

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trouble, "what is it? You—you look as if something had happened. . . . I—don't think I'm prying, but—if you want to tell me about it. . . ."

Angus shook his head and turned away his eyes. "No," he said, "I can't. . . . I mustn't."

"Is it—is it——" She stopped suddenly, for intuition had given her the answer to her unasked question. "It's Lydia Canfield," she said gently, and saw Angus's hands clench the arms of his chair.

"What has she done to you? . . . Has she—did she say—no?"

"I can't ask her. . . . I didn't ask her." The words seemed torn from him. "*I won't* ask her."

"Why?" Myrtle's voice affected Angus as some unguent would affect a burn; it soothed him, eased his pain. . . . It loosened his tongue.

"I—how could I tell her?" he said. "You know—what I've been—all about me. . . . It's something that can't be—don't you understand? It wouldn't be right . . . I never can ask anyone—to marry me. No one would marry me . . . not Lydia. . . ."

"Angus Burke," she said sharply, "you mustn't say that—you mustn't think such things. Why shouldn't you ask Lydia—or anybody else to marry you? . . . Why, Angus, you don't know yourself. You don't know what people

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think of you—how they respect you. Who cares now what happened so long ago when you were a baby? You weren't responsible. You weren't to blame—just unfortunate—so unfortunate! And now we're proud of you—all your friends are proud of what you've accomplished. . . . There's no reason on earth why you shouldn't love any girl you choose—or why she shouldn't be proud to have your love."

"No. . . . No. . . ."

"You mustn't go on thinking like this. . . . Why, there isn't another young man in town who can compare with you. See what you've done—alone, and against—against such obstacles. See how you've made a place for yourself. . . . If I were Lydia Canfield I'd be happy—happy!"

"I've killed a man. . . . I've been in jail. . . . And my father—my mother! How could I ask—it would be an insult."

"I'm a girl, Angus, and I know. I'm going to tell you something, Angus, that's a secret yet. I've promised to marry Mr. Hart—from Deal. You've met him. I tell you this so—so I can say what I want to without being embarrassed. . . . Lydia talks a lot about family and ancestors. So can I if I want to. My family is as good as hers—yet—if you asked me to marry you, I would be glad. If you had chosen me, and had made love to me, I know I should have loved

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you. You understand me, Angus? I would be very, very proud to think I—had qualities which would make a man like you—care for me. . . . Any girl would be proud. Lydia would be.”

Angus only shook his head.

“Perhaps,” said Myrtle, “you’re making *her* miserable—who knows? Nobody can tell what Lydia’s thinking. . . . You haven’t any right to keep it from her. How do you know but what she’s—she’s wanting, and wanting, and *wanting* you to tell her?”

He turned his back upon her, not brusquely, but with the instinct of all animal life to conceal its wound. She laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. “Think about what I’ve said. . . . It’s true. . . . I know. . . .” She walked to the door, stopped, and said softly, “Speak to her, Angus. . . . Good-by.”

That night Myrtle was tactful enough to place Angus and Lydia at different tables. As hostess she watched them closely—especially closely did she scrutinize Lydia, so closely, indeed, that Lydia became uneasily conscious of her scrutiny. . . . After the dishes were cleared away Myrtle found an opportunity to whisper to Angus. “You must speak to her—to-night . . . It will be all right. I—I know it will be.”

Angus turned his grave face toward her and

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smiled. "I thought it all out this afternoon," he said in reply. "I can't do it—ever."

"I tell you she *wants* you to."

"No. . . . And even if that were true—I shouldn't ask her to marry me. It would pull her down."

"Bosh!" Myrtle said in hopeless impatience.

Lydia watched Angus covertly while the meal was in progress. Not once had his glance met hers, for he kept his face turned away from her resolutely; dared not look at her for fear of the story his eyes might tell. Lydia was piqued—but presently she understood. She comprehended that his solicitude was for her peace of mind. He was thinking of her, not of himself. He was unselfish, fine, chivalric! With these qualities she endowed him, and her heart beat the higher because of it. . . . It was after Myrtle found these things in her eyes that she urged Angus to speak. . . .

Since the day of that fateful encounter Angus had not been alone in trouble of spirit. Perhaps Lydia's emotions had been more painful than his, because her mind was quicker, her imagination more vivid; certainly her outward agitation had been greater. Nights had been spent in tears and self-examinings—in attempted self-deception which did not deceive.

"I do *not* love him," she whispered again and

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again into her pillow, and in this denial she confessed, knew she confessed, but still would not admit to herself that she confessed. . . . Since that day she had not seen Angus and her desire to see him became a gnawing hunger; more than once she was on the point of sending for him, seeking him—but barriers of pride remained strong, unbroken.

This was an attitude which could not persist. Either one is in love or one is not. Love is not a matter of the will, but of the heart, of the emotions. A certain basic common sense resided in Lydia, and this common sense compelled her at last to face matters as matters were. Fact demanded treatment as fact. . . . And then, with sobbings, with shame, Lydia Canfield admitted to herself that she loved Angus Burke. . . . She, a Canfield, loved the son of a thief—a man who had been tried for murder!

It was a problem. The fact was there to be dealt with. . . . She became calmer as she sought to deal with it. It was her misfortune to love where she should not love, she told herself. Her love had gone without her consent, against her will. It could not be helped. It was an intangible thing over which she could exercise no control—but when it came to tangible matters, control was possible. She was mistress of herself. What if she did love? It spelled un-

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happiness, perhaps, but not surrender. She would not give in to her love. Never would she bind herself to Angus Burke; never would she become a part of his life, mistress of his home. . . . *That* her will could accomplish. She foresaw distress, wretchedness, but better than a surrender of high principles—better than to degrade the family blood which was hers in sacred trust. . . . Hers was the attitude of a fanatic—and for that reason the more formidable.

There were hours when she was afraid; when she trembled for the strength of her resolution. Sometimes her yearning for Angus was so great as to be almost beyond her power of repression. She determined to go away, to seek safety in flight . . . to find some means—to hit upon some device which would make it impossible for her to give way to her love. . . .

In her calmer moments she was surprised, in analyzing her feelings toward Angus, to find that, mingled and interwoven with them, was a sincere admiration—an admiration for his character, for his person, for his accomplishments. She was conscious of pride in him, and in what he had become. . . . The fact of his squalid origin but added to this pride. . . . She was unable to understand this phenomenon. . . . It added to her fears.

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"I'll go away as soon as I'm twenty-one," she told herself. "I'll go a long ways—to Europe. I'll visit Aunt Margaret in Paris. . . ."

It was in this state of mind that Lydia came to Myrtle's party, which, as such parties inevitably do, divided into couples and groups, carrying their chairs here and there; some, lover-like, seeking an obvious seclusion, knowing they were expected to do so; others walking about to form little knots which broke up only to reform again, of different constituents. Throughout the early stages of the evening young Malcolm Crane maneuvered to draw Lydia away from the others. He had come determined to make a last effort to win her for himself—and, until he could put his fortune once more to the test, he was silent, taciturn, preoccupied. . . . Had not Lydia's mind been full of other and more compelling matters she would not have permitted herself to be drawn away where Crane could be troublesome again—but her thoughts were troubled by her own problem; her eyes constantly, and against her will, were following Angus Burke. . . . She was unhappy.

"Lydia," Malcolm said with unaccustomed directness, "I have asked you twice before to marry me. I have told you how much I—want you . . . how much I will always want you. . . ." He stopped, for Lydia was looking at him

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fixedly, studying him as if he were some new and interesting creature she had never seen before. Presently, without replying, she turned her eyes away, closed them, seemed forgetful of his presence. . . . She did not look at Malcolm again—but through the trees she could see Angus Burke talking with Myrtle Cuyler; felt an impulse to go to him, a desire to hear his voice, to be close by his side. . . .

Crane was speaking again—into ears which heard but did not comprehend. . . . Her desire to be near Angus was almost irresistible. It frightened her—the hunger of it terrified her. How could she hold out against such hunger? Was it possible this unwanted love of hers would prove strong enough to overcome her will—break down the determination to shut him out of her life? She feared it would. . . . Yes. . . . Her resolution to go away was the only safe refuge, and she must go soon. Something, she knew not what, might surprise her into yielding—some unexpected event might betray her. . . .

By an effort she compelled herself to listen to Malcolm's impassioned voice. "I've never wanted any other girl. Ever since we were babies together I've thought of you as my wife—you know I have. . . . When we were little we used to play we were married—do you remember?"

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"Yes," she said abstractedly, "I remember." To herself she was saying, "I won't go to him. . . . I mustn't go to him."

"I'll be through college in a year," Malcolm was saying, "and I want you then—right at the beginning of my real life. I want you as soon as I can have you."

Lydia watched Angus walk across the yard with Myrtle. "I'll go to him. . . . I'll go. . . . If something doesn't stop me, I'll go," she said to herself.

Again she called her attention back to Malcolm, who, intent upon his pleading, had not seen how her thoughts were not upon what he was saying. . . . What *was* he saying? Yes. . . . Yes. He was asking her to marry him. . . . She did not want to marry him—she did not want to marry anybody—or to think of marriage. Then she caught her breath. Why not? Here was safety from Angus Burke. If she married Malcolm Crane she could not give herself to Angus; nothing could give her to Angus then. If she pledged her word to Malcolm she would not break it—for her pledged word she knew she would keep. . . . Others had not thought it wrong to marry for money, for position. Would she do wrong to save herself from a marriage she feared—to save herself from the weakness of her own love? No. . . . No. . . . Anything

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rather than that; anything rather than link her life with Angus Burke's—whom she loved, hated, despired, admired. . . . She forced herself to listen to Malcolm.

"Won't you promise, Lydia? Won't you tell me now you 'll marry me in a year? It will help me through—the thought of it. Won't you promise?"

"Malcolm," she said in a voice which did not sound like her own, "I don't love you . . . I don't think I ever shall. But if you want me to marry you, I will." Her voice took on a note of shrillness, of brittleness; her words came rapidly, feverishly, as if she must have them said before something stopped her. "I'll marry you *now*, this minute, if you want me to, or I'll promise to marry you when you are ready. . . . But I don't love you. You must understand that. . . . I don't love you."

Malcolm could not believe his ears. His heart leaped, leaped in spite of the warning conveyed by her words. He heard them, but waved them aside with the optimism of youth. "Only promise!" he said. "Only promise! . . . Love! I can wait for that. It—it will come."

"It will never come. . . . But I—I will try to—be what a wife should be to you, Malcolm. I'll try. . . . I'll try. . . ."

He drew closer, sought to pass his arm about

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her, to draw her to him, to kiss her lips, but she held him back—with panic in her heart she pushed him away. “No, no,” she cried, “not now, not yet. I told you I didn’t love you. . . . I told you.”

He smiled. Happiness enough for one evening was his, and he could humor her whims. One expected strange whims from Lydia. “I won’t bother you, dear,” he said. “You’re—upset . . . I understand.”

“Be sure you *do* understand,” she said. Then she smiled wanly. “Come. . . . Let’s have it over with. Let’s tell the others. I want them to know.”

They walked toward the house, out upon the open lawn where the guests clustered. Here Lydia stopped and raised her face to the moonlight, and Malcolm saw how pale, set, desperate it was before she spoke—not at all as a young woman speaks who announces her engagement to assembled friends. “Boys and girls,” she said, fighting to speak lightly, gayly, “Malcolm and I have something to tell you. You are to be the first to hear about it. . . . He has asked me to marry him when he comes home next spring, and I have——” Her voice faltered an instant. “I have promised him I will.” She stopped, swayed slightly, and clutched at a chair for support. . . . But her face was smiling, and there were those

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who carried the picture of that smile in their memories for years. . . .

Instantly there was a chorus of excited cries, a clatter of astonished conversation, a pressing forward with congratulations. Lydia looked at the faces before her, searching for Angus. How would he receive the news? How would he take it? It would be a shock, a blow, and how would he bear it? He would bear it manfully, as a man should bear it—that was her proud thought. A strange thought to come at such a moment. . . .

Angus, standing by Myrtle Cuyler's side, heard Lydia's announcement; his face became a mask, an impenetrable mask of dullness, unemotional, such a face as he had not worn for years. His eyes darkened and deepened, his hands shut once and opened. Then he breathed heavily, not a sigh, but a deep, tearing breath. . . . That was all.

"Oh, Angus, Angus. . . ." Myrtle's voice came to him dimly, told him how she felt his suffering.

He turned to her gravely, unsmiling—startlingly emotionless. "I knew," he said. "I told you she—was not—for me. . . . I knew."

"It's a shame," said the loyal Myrtle. "Lydia Canfield ought to—I'd know how to choose between Malcolm Crane and you."

"We—we mustn't hang back," he said, and

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drew Myrtle forward with him to the little group which surrounded Malcolm and Lydia.

"Lydia," he said slowly, "I hope you will be very happy." He did not speak to Crane, did not glance at him. And Malcolm ignored Angus. Lydia's eyes clung to Angus's face appealingly; a suppliant glance, begging for something, he knew not what. . . . He wondered at that glance, and his perplexity grew with the passage of time. . . . What was the meaning of that look he saw in Lydia Canfield's eyes? . . . *

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

IT was at this time that Rainbow began to talk in whispers about Judge Crane. The gist of them in the beginning was embodied in the words of old Sile Weaver, who said one day in the post office, "Jedge Crane hain't contrivin' to come out as well as he calc'lated, seems as though." Hammond, the grocer, who sold the Judge supplies for his camp, contributed to the growing opinion that Crane might not be a giant of finance after all by his continuous expression of worry, and by ill-natured remarks which demonstrated he was not wholly at ease respecting the payment of the account. . . . In a week Rainbow seethed with gossip and with sub-surface speculations as to how the Judge was going to "make out." . . . Crane's manner did nothing to reassure the doubters.

The man was desperate. He must prosecute his work with extraordinary enterprise in order to avert ruin, but he had not a penny with which to continue. He was face to face with the impossibility of meeting his next week's payroll.

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Money he must have or oil he must have and neither was forthcoming. His credit was exhausted; every scrap of property he owned was pledged and he was face to face with disaster. The moment in which any man realizes this—especially such a man as Malcolm Crane—is one of dreadful possibilities and potentialities. Your business man, your man who pursues a career whose success is dependent upon the approbation of the public, fears insolvency even more than he fears death. Almost daily in the public prints this dark fact is demonstrated—the fact that, offered the choice between facing bankruptcy and his Maker, a man will choose to throw himself into the abyss of eternity. . . . We find, as we study mankind in the laboratory of life, that he will prefer the risks of crime to the mercilessness of the bankruptcy court. Faced with financial ruin, a disaster which seems to carry down reputation as well as fortune, the most upright man will not escape his hour of temptation. . . . It is the good fortune of many in such an emergency that temptation is not coupled with opportunity.

Judge Crane was an honest man. He was not a big man, might even be a small man, yet he owned his set of ideals, and honestly held its place among them. Perhaps it was the honesty of expediency—much virtue exists not for

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virtue itself but for the rewards of virtue. As a lawyer and judge he had striven, according to his nature, to act honorably, impartially, conscientiously. It is true he had his meannesses and his petty vanity and the vindictiveness which so often goes hand in hand with vanity. On the other hand, he was of commendable industry, holding to laudable ambitions—and with the persistence of fair winds and in chartered seas he might have voyaged to honored success. In short, he was a normal man, compounded as we all must be of the admirable and of the despicable. . . . But he was not equipped with that sturdiness of soul which alone enables the best of us to weather tempest and shipwreck. . . . By his good name he set great store. . . .

When temptation first lifted its head before his consciousness he crushed it down with a shudder. It returned. . . .

The country lawyer, the country judge, occupies to an extent the position of the trust company in larger centers of population. Fiduciary responsibilities are thrust upon him. He must manage estates, husband investments; his safe is the depository of securities, and it is not without precedent that he holds power of attorney to exercise the widest discretion over the properties of his clients. He must be both man of law and man of business, and to this rule Malcolm Crane

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was no exception. . . . And because this was so it is manifest that temptation walked hand in hand with opportunity.

In the safe at his office were securities—under his control. It is true he was under bond as executor, administrator, or trustee—but a bond is effective only in the moment of final accounting. Temptation whispered to him that it would be an easy, a safe matter to borrow some of these securities to tide him over his immediate difficulties, to pledge them outside Rainbow, and to redeem the pledge when the oil commenced to flow and his dreams were realized. It would seem that this particular form of crime is the one best calculated to overturn the normally honest man. It was a “borrowing.” . . .

Early in September Angus Burke was in Deal in consultation with the local banker. After the business was satisfactorily completed Mr. Richards, who had a liking for the young man and a generous admiration for his sound qualities, invited Angus to drive behind his new team. . . . It was during this drive that the name of Judge Crane entered the conversation—when Mr. Richards spoke with some show of curiosity of Crane’s rising financial star. “He was here in Deal a few days ago,” said Mr. Richards. “I did a small jag of business with him—loaned him

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a matter of ten thousand dollars. . . . You folks reckon him a coming man, don't you?"

"He's our circuit judge," said Angus.

Mr. Richards laughed. "That is what I would call a safe and sane answer, Burke. . . . Well, coming man or not, I took no risk. He gave me absolutely gilt-edged security."

Angus schooled his face to show no expression. Gilt-edged security for ten thousand dollars! Where had Judge Crane found securities of that class to present as collateral for a ten-thousand-dollar loan? . . . Where? . . . He was silent during the remainder of the drive, but when they stopped at the station a few moments before train time he ventured a question. "Would you mind telling me what securities Judge Crane deposited as collateral for his loan?"

Richards glanced keenly at the young man's face. "Why," he said, "as between banker and banker I've no objection. . . . Liberty Bonds. . . . Is anything out of kilter?"

Angus shook his head; his eyes were worried, his face set and grave. "I don't know," he said. "I don't understand. . . ."

That night he sat long in his office figuring, tabulating information. He wished Henry G. Woodhouse were at home, for this was a matter which touched his employer. The son of Judge

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Crane was Mr. Woodhouse's heir. . . . How would Henry G. behave in the circumstances which confronted Angus? He felt it was his duty to act as his employer would have acted.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

IF Lydia Canfield expected her engagement to Malcolm Crane to bring her ease, she was bitterly disappointed. She discovered, as others have discovered before her, that a promise to one man will not force another man out of mind. One may will to give one's self, but one cannot will to forget, for the function of remembering is independent of the will. For reasons of justice and self-preservation it has been made automatic. Yet Lydia did experience a certain sensation of safety; Malcolm Crane was a bulwark between her and Angus which could not be scaled.

On the morning after Lydia announced her engagement, Myrtle Cuyler, as in duty bound she was, came to talk it over. She came to express her surprise—although she felt that surprise over any action of Lydia's was not altogether to be justified, because the unusual was the usual in so far as Lydia's actions and motives were concerned. . . . She was disappointed, too, and hurt for Angus's sake. . . . Myrtle found Lydia swollen-eyed, secluded in her room, looking as

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if she had not slept through the entire night. . . . Found her careless of personal appearance, careless of everything; in such a state of mind as no one had ever seen Lydia in before.

"I came over as soon as I could," said Myrtle, "to hear all about it."

Lydia turned away her head. "I don't want to talk about it," she murmured chokingly. "I don't . . ."

"What is it? What has happened? You didn't go and quarrel with Mal before you got home!"

"Quarrel with him? No. . . . No. . . . I wish . . ." The strain had been too great. Unnerved by a sleepless night, by a night of wretchedness, by a night spent in rebellion of spirit and in muttering over and over and over Angus Burke's name . . . in stifled terrors of the future, she found her strength of body and will and courage gone.

"Oh, Myrtle . . . Myrtle . . ." she cried, and flung herself sobbing upon the bed.

Myrtle was startled. The thing was so unlike Lydia, so impossible in Lydia, and she sat down beside her, stroked her hair, mothered her as her gentle nature was so finely able to do until the paroxysm had passed. "Tell me," she said. "Tell me, Lydia. It'll make you feel better."

"I can't. . . . I can't. . . . Oh, Myrtle, I'm

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a coward, a mean, miserable coward. . . . I wish—I wish I had never been born.” Then she straightened up suddenly, fiercely. “What did *he* say? . . . How did *he* act? Tell me.”

“He? Who?”

“Never mind. . . . Nobody. . . . I don’t know what I’m saying. It’s been a dreadful night and I—I’m half crazy.”

“Who do you mean?” persisted Myrtle. “Malcolm?”

“What do I care what Malcolm said or what Malcolm thought!” Lydia burst out vehemently. “I know about him—all about him. Why, I’m going to marry *him*. I’m going to live in the same house with him—all my life. . . . He’s going to be my husband—my *husband!* . . .” Again she threw herself on the bed, silent now, tense, with hands clenched and pressed over her ears, as if they might by some magic shut out the entire world from her thoughts.

Myrtle was frightened, would have called Mary Browning, but Lydia suddenly clung to her, would not let her go. She drew Lydia to her, held closely this proud girl who never would submit to embraces or familiarities, held her tightly, stroking her hair and her cheek as if she were any common girl in trouble. . . . What, she wondered, could have caused this outburst? . . . She herself was engaged, but the days

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following her engagement had been happy ones, without fears or questionings. . . . She could not understand Lydia—but then no one had ever understood her; yet she was wise enough to understand that here was no school-girl's tempest in a teapot, but a woman's tragedy, real, terrible, devastating.

Myrtle struggled for understanding. . . . Her first conclusion, reached by intuition more than by logic, was that Lydia could not love Malcolm Crane. Yet she had promised herself in marriage to him. . . . The thing was incomprehensible. Why should Lydia Canfield, of all created beings, choose the immolation of a loveless marriage; what could compel her to such a step? She puzzled over it, seeking some romantic explanation, some mystery, but reached the conclusion that there could be nothing to compel Lydia to marry Malcolm against her will. Lydia had wealth, independence, perfect freedom of choice.

There must be some reason, potent to Lydia. Knowing her friend as she did, she recognized the truth that Lydia's reason might not seem adequate to anybody else—which would not in the least interfere with the power it would exercise over Lydia. . . . Cross currents of thought, fragments of recollections, opinions previously held flitted through her mind as Lydia

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clung to her. . . . She thought of many things, of her astonishment that Lydia had chosen Malcolm, of her belief that Lydia loved Angus Burke—of Angus Burke's face when he heard Lydia announce her engagement. . . . And these fragments touched some spring of intuition, showing her the truth.

"Lydia . . . Lydia," she cried, "why did you do it? How could you do it?" Her words were drawn from her, uttered involuntarily. "He loves you—Angus Burke loves you—and you love him. . . . You love each other—and you put him aside for Malcolm Crane! How could you? . . . How could you?"

Lydia sat upright, suddenly calm, cold. She seemed older, matured, drawn—almost un-beautiful.

"How could I do anything else?" she asked. "You must see. . . . There was no other way—because I was afraid. I wanted him so that I was afraid. . . ."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid I would give in to it—that I would give myself to him. . . . Oh, I loved him—loved him."

"You love Angus Burke!"

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . . When Malcolm asked me to marry him I knew that was the way—that if I married Mal I would be safe from Angus.

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“ . . . Don’t you see? . . . And then I told everybody—so—so it would be irrevocable.”

“But why? Why? If you love him and he loves you—Lydia Canfield, you must be crazy!”

“I think I shall go crazy. . . . Oh, don’t you understand? Won’t anybody understand? Think, Myrtle, think! Think of what Angus was. Think of his dreadful father! . . . How could I marry a man—like that?”

“Do you mean to sit there and tell me, Lydia Canfield, that you wouldn’t marry Angus Burke even when you knew you loved him and he loved you—just because you’re ashamed of his father and his mother? Just because you’re too absurdly proud to forget the—the misfortune that happened to him when he was a little boy—when he was too young to help himself? . . . He’s worth a dozen Malcolm Cranes. Family! I’m ashamed of you—I—I almost *despise* you. It’s nothing but vanity, silly, criminal vanity. . . . Lydia, if I thought Angus loved me I’d be proud—*proud*. I never knew anybody like him. He’s good; he’s strong. . . . See what he’s made of himself. . . . And you’re ashamed to marry him—you and your silly ancestors! What did they amount to? . . . Just name a single one of them who was as good a man as Angus Burke!”

“Myrtle Cuyler——” Lydia stopped, choking. Something like her old facility at flying into a

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passion was coming to her rescue. "How dare you speak so to me? How dare you——"

"Dare. . . ." Myrtle shook her head. "Oh, I've no patience with you. . . . I'll tell you this: Angus Burke is good enough for anybody. I've a few ancestors of my own, and he could have had me if he'd wanted me. . . ."

Again Lydia's mood changed. "Don't," she cried piteously, "don't . . . I can't bear it . . ."

"You ought to suffer," said the mild, gentle Myrtle, aroused to cruelty. "A girl that will spoil two lives—three, for you are spoiling Malcolm's, too—just for a ridiculous pride! I've admired you—I've thought you had character, stronger character than I, and I've envied you—but you haven't. . . . If you have any heart or any backbone you'll get up and dress, and you won't waste any time over it. Then you'll tell Malcolm Crane—*now*—that it was all a mistake. You can't go through with it, anyhow. . . . Break it off with Mal—and then wait. Everything will come out all right. Everything always does—if you play fair. . . ."

"No. . . . No. . . . I must go on. If I broke with Mal I—I couldn't—answer for myself. I'd go to Angus, I know I would. . . . Maybe what you say is all so, Myrtle. But that doesn't alter things a bit. I won't marry Angus Burke. I won't, I won't, I won't! Think of it, Myrtle,

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that man—his father—would be grandfather to—to my children!”

From that thought Myrtle could not move Lydia—and, indeed, when it was presented in that light she was compelled to admit that it was not without some foundation upon which a girl like Lydia might base her position. . . . It made the thing dreadfully concrete. Titus Burke as grandfather of her children was a point which had never presented itself to Myrtle. . . . It was not a pleasant point to contemplate. . . .

Lydia was calmer now; she had passed through her storm, had surmounted her hour of weakness; the outburst was over. . . . Now, if she suffered, it would be in silence, bravely; nobody should ever again see the deepness of her wound. . . . She felt she would have strength to go through with it now—strength to marry Malcolm Crane. . . .

. . . It was a strange engagement. Poor Malcolm was unable to understand his *fiancée*, to comprehend her manner, her moods, her capricious conduct toward himself. She had promised to marry him, to be his wife. She was willing ultimately to unite her life with his, yet she exhibited toward him an aversion which both hurt and frightened him. . . . It was as if he were repulsive to her. . . . Once he tried to kiss her—once after the night of their engagement.

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. . . She pushed him away with a violence which amounted almost to frenzy and faced him with a blaze of rage and repugnance. He drew back, startled.

"But Lydia . . ." he expostulated.

"Don't touch me," she said with savage vehemence. "Don't dare to touch me. . . . Not now. Never until I give you permission. I won't have you touching me."

"But Lydia . . ." he repeated.

She interrupted him with a gesture—convulsive, hysterical. Her eyes seemed to hate him as her body shrank from him. "I told you I didn't love you. I told you. Go away. . . . Go away out of my sight. . . ."

He went, dismayed. How could any young man be expected to understand such conduct?

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

EARLY in October Bishwhang burst into the bank and rushed its length into Angus Burke's office.

"It's busted!" he said excitedly. "It hain't no good! It's petered out! You said you wanted to know."

"What has petered out, Bishwhang? What are you talking about?" Angus asked.

"Them oil wells of the Judge's. I heard you tellin' Dave you was keepin' track of 'em the best you could, and wished you could hear it quick if they fizzled. . . . Well, they fizzled. I heard the boss of it all say right out that 'twan't no good. He says, says he, that the' wan't no ile—not enough to pay fer chawin' tobaccer. . . . I heard him say it to Judge Crane, and the Judge was like to go crazy right on the spot. Yes, sir, that's what happened, and I heard it. . . ."

Angus questioned Bishwhang carefully, delved for corroborative detail. The facts as Bishwhang gave them seemed conclusive—the oil project was a failure; oil did not exist in quanti-

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ties sufficient to warrant a continuation of the work. . . . It was clear to Angus that Crane would not dare admit failure, could, in the circumstances, do nothing but make pretense of going ahead—until the crash came. A crash was imminent, inevitable, and as a banker he dreaded the effects upon the community of a financial debacle of any sort. . . . But what to do? Crane was already toppling, could not be propped up. The man was so involved, financially and morally, that nothing could be saved from the wreckage—except, perhaps, the good name of the father of Henry G. Woodhouse's heir. . . . Innocent persons would suffer, yet, so far as Angus could see, there was nothing he could do to avert it. With full knowledge of the imminent catastrophe he could do nothing but sit and await the *dénouement*. . . . He found himself pitying Judge Crane. . . .

How deeply involved in moral turpitude Crane might be was a matter Angus could not estimate. He knew the Judge had hypothecated securities not his own, but to what extent it was impossible to say. . . . The Judge must be desperate. Never in his life had Angus wished so fervently for someone to lean upon, for the return of Mr. Woodhouse—for a hint at least of how Mr. Woodhouse would desire to conduct himself in the circumstances. How far, he asked himself,

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would Mr. Woodhouse be willing to go to save Crane's good name and to preserve his forfeited honor?

This crisis in Crane's affairs came at a time when Angus needed sorely something to occupy his mind. With such a problem before him constantly, he had scant leisure, save in the night hours, to give to Lydia Canfield. . . . This mental absorption did not kill his grief nor destroy the mental agony he experienced—it merely compelled those emotions to lie dormant. Always he was vaguely conscious of it, suppressed, lying in wait just under the surface, to surge upward and to engulf him. . . . It seemed strange to him that Lydia's engagement to Malcolm Crane should hurt him so, for he had never expected to win her for himself; always he had known her to be unattainable. . . . The fact was that his pain was not the pain of loss, but the death of hope. Subconsciously he had hoped and dreamed. Reason may inform that one's desire is impossible of fulfillment, yet, until the happening of some event which makes it irrevocably impossible, hope will persist. This definite event had occurred. Lydia had given herself to another and hope was dead. . . .

He got up from his chair and went into the bank, where he stopped behind Gene Goff's desk and said, "If Judge Crane comes in here to-day,

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ask him to step into my office. . . . No matter what he wants, don't give it to him until I have seen him."

"All right," Gene said, and paused. "Say, I wonder when they're goin' to begin on the manufacturin' company. I've got a hundred dollars into it." He said this proudly, with the air of an investor. "I guess 'most everybody in Rainbow's got somethin' into it. . . . We're all goin' to make money. Sure."

"I hope so," said Angus.

"Have you got anythin' into it?"

"Yes, Gene, a little," said Angus, and returned to his office to wait. . . . An hour later, summoned to the office by a customer, he glanced casually through the window and saw young Mal Crane passing, suit case in hand. Angus wondered vaguely what the young man was doing at home, and decided, with a twinge, that he had come to spend Sunday with Lydia. . . .

Shortly after noon Judge Crane entered the bank. His face was gray and drawn; his eyes glittered with an unpleasant, unnatural light, and his hands twitched nervously at his sides. There was something furtive about the man, something of the fugitive. He seemed strangely interested in what went on behind his back, for he persisted in turning every now and then to look. As he approached the teller's window he drew himself

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together, dressed himself in something like his old pomposity, and with spurious nonchalance wished Gene Goff the time of day, the while he fumbled in an inner pocket. His actions were those of a man desiring to impress the beholder with the casualness, the unimportance of the thing he did.

Gene coughed. "Judge Crane, Mr. Burke said you was to step in to see him if you come in."

Crane glared. "He did, did he? . . . Well, you tell him I'm too busy. . . . I——"

"He says I wasn't to do any business with you till after he'd seen you," Gene said.

"What does this mean? The impertinent puppy! I'll see him. Oh, I'll see him all right—and when I'm through he'll have a new set of manners. . . ." He flung himself away from the window and rushed toward Angus's door, bursting into the room a-tremble with rage.

"Sit down, Judge Crane," Angus said quietly. There was a tenseness, a decision, a sureness about Angus as he leaned forward in his chair which would have impressed another than his visitor. . . . He knew he stood on delicate ground, felt a breathlessness, a hollowness at the pit of his stomach—yet was resolved to go through with the matter as he hoped his employer would have gone through with it.

Crane did not sit down. His features worked

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as he struggled to speak; then words came in a torrent, jumbled, incoherent, passionate. He raved. Angus waited phlegmatically for the outburst to wear itself out. . . . Presently Crane found a measure of self-restraint. His spontaneous invective became forced and studied. "How dare you? How dare you order me to see you—as if I were a clerk? What do you mean by it, you—you——"

"Sit down, Judge," said Angus. "We may be a long time."

"Sit down! You impertinent——"

"I am trying to find some way out—for you," Angus said. "Because Mr. Woodhouse would want me to. . . . You are bankrupt. There is no oil. . . ."

"No oil. What are you talking about? Who told you that cock-and-bull story?"

"There is no oil," Angus said. "You have lost every cent you have in the world. That is your business. Where Mr. Woodhouse will be interested is—is the other part of it."

"What other part? What are you talking about?"

"The embezzlement part," Angus said baldly.

Crane's eyes widened, glared with a light akin to insanity. His face went dead white, and for an instant he seemed to be paralyzed in all his members. He struggled to speak, but no sounds

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came save an incoherent jibbering of mingled fright and rage. ". . . Lie. . . . Jailbird! . . . Filthy swine! . . ."

"I *know*," Angus said, in the same dead level voice he had employed from the beginning. "I know you have embezzled and hypothecated securities deposited with you in trust. I do not know how many or to what amount. It is that you must tell me."

"Tell you—tell you—you—you murderer! You jailbird! You—you scum! . . ."

Angus passed the words, though he flinched and paled. "I am bound," he said, "for Mr. Woodhouse's sake to do what I can——" But he never finished, for Crane turned suddenly, with an imprecation, and strode toward the door. He flung it open, stood an instant glaring, white-faced, terrible of eye, at Angus. Then he slammed the door and disappeared. . . . Angus sighed, leaned his head upon his arms, and the knuckles of his clenched fists showed white. The ordeal had been more terrible than he had anticipated.

Fifteen minutes later Gene rapped on the door and Angus summoned him to enter.

"Well," said Gene, "we finished it up. Took a doggone long time to count, though—and what with him pesterin' me to hurry, I thought I'd never git done."

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"What's that? Counting what?"

"All that money—for the Judge. Dum nigh to fifty thousand dollars. . . . Ought to give a feller warnin so's he could git ready for that big a withdrawal."

Angus felt curiously cold, curiously dead. "Do—do you say you—counted fifty thousand dollars for Judge Crane?"

"Like you said. Uh-huh. He said you'n him had agreed it was better to deposit the funds of the manufacturin' company in a city bank—that that was what you wanted to see him about. . . . So he drewed his check as treasurer and I give it to him."

Angus sat staring at Gene so fixedly that the teller became uneasy, frightened. "D'ye mean," he gasped, "that suthin's *wrong*?"

"Wrong!" Angus said. "Wrong! . . . Here's Mr. Woodhouse's address. Wire him to come home at once. . . . I'm going after Crane. Keep—keep a still tongue in your head."

"What—what's it all mean?"

"Judge Crane," said Angus, "has just absconded with the capital of the Novelties Company—and I'm going after him." As soon as the words were out he would have recalled them, but there could be no recall. He seized Gene's shoulders and shook him. "You're to keep quiet about it—quiet. Do you understand?"

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. . . Nobody must know—such a thing—about Judge Crane.”

Before Gene could reply Angus was out of the room and hurrying up the street. Crane had preceded him by a quarter of an hour; had entered his own automobile and had driven rapidly out of town toward the west. . . . Craig Browning's car was standing before his office and Angus commandeered it—he had often driven Henry G. Woodhouse on errands about the countryside—and set out in pursuit.

Craig Browning had a nice taste in cars of high power and great speed. Never had this car been driven so rapidly as Angus Burke drove it to-day, for he drove as a man can drive only when he has utterly forgotten himself and the fragility of his neck; when the objective to be gained erases from his mind all self-consciousness. . . . The westward road stretched, with sundry turnings, some twenty-five miles to Deal; Angus told himself he must overtake Judge Crane before that twenty-five miles was traversed; must overtake and compel him to return to Rainbow. . . .

In his hurried thoughts he blamed himself; where he had sought to aid, to save if possible, he had precipitated the catastrophe. He had thrown Crane into sudden panic, so that the man, incapable of reasoning, had seen no course

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but theft and flight. . . . So reasoned Angus, but in this he was wrong. For Crane had planned, and being an opportunist, had been cunning enough to avail himself of an opportunity. He had come face to face with ruin, and not being of that fiber which dares to escape into nothingness, had chosen rather the coward's part of flight. He had come to the bank that day for no other purpose but that of withdrawing the funds of the Novelties Company, the savings of his fellow-townsmen, and of disappearing into a world which finds mysterious methods of hiding those who have sufficient funds to pay. . . . He chose the life of a fugitive, hunted, photographed, hounded, to facing exposure and prison. . . . The choice was deliberate.

Craig Browning's yellow car seemed to flatten itself to the macadam; it appeared, not to speed along upon four wheels, but to pour, fluidlike, along the road. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour Angus pressed the accelerator to the floorboards, knowing well that he traveled two miles to Crane's utmost possible one. . . . In half an hour he saw, far ahead, the dust of a speeding car. It drew nearer, nearer, became clearly discernible. Angus's eyes were glued to its tail; his face was grim, and he drove grimly—a set, inexorable figure. Crane did not look back, did not realize pursuit until Craig Brown-

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ing's horn shrieked out its raucous warning demand for half the road. Then he swerved aside, sitting hunched over the wheel, his chin buried in his breast as if with some thought of hiding his face. . . . Angus drew alongside, slackened his speed and held the position. . . .

"Judge Crane! . . ." he shouted.

Above the roaring of the engines the sound reached Crane's consciousness; he turned his face and his features mirrored first astonishment, then unbelief, then wild, unbalanced terror. For an instant the cars raced side by side, then, as if the strain were too great to be supported, Crane's hands twitched upon the wheel; their grip must have loosened, for the car swerved sharply. . . . Its forward wheel overtopped the edge of the ditch and it took the plunge, careening wildly, rocking, swaying, sliding—until with a terrific crash it encountered a tree. There it seemed to pause for an appreciable instant before it buckled, slid to the right and overturned. . . .

Angus brought his car to a stop, leaped to the ground and ran appalled to the wreckage. . . . Judge Crane lay to one side, his right arm beneath him, a leg bent at a gruesome, impossible angle, his head twisted queerly. . . . Angus knelt beside him, raised him, looked in his face—and needed no physician to tell him that Judge

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Crane's course was run. . . . His neck was broken. He was dead.

Angus, frightened by the calamity as any boy would be frightened, bewildered, almost in a panic, scanned the road for help, but there was none—no one upon whom to rely but himself. . . . He laid his enemy upon the grass and backed his car to the spot; his strength permitted him to lift the Judge and to place him gently in the tonneau. . . . Then, from the wreckage of the car he extricated Judge Crane's bag, made certain that what he sought was there and placed it upon the seat beside himself. . . . This done, he turned the car toward Rainbow. . . .

Half an hour later he drew up before the bank, not conscious of the crowd which had gathered before the door. . . . He alighted, Judge Crane's bag gripped in his hand, and forced his way to the door, unaware how he was compelled to force his way, or how exclamations and questions rained upon him from his excited neighbors. . . . He walked to the teller's wicket and pushed the bag toward Gene.

"There it is," he said. "I—got it back." He paused, swayed, clung to the grating. "Judge Crane is—outside," he finished, and then sank limply into a chair. . . .

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

CRAIG BROWNING brought home the news to Mary as soon as his presence was no longer required at the bank—hurried home to forestall distorted rumor. The task of breaking the news to Lydia disturbed him more than he would have cared to admit, for he and Mary were aware the girl was passing through some trying crisis. High-strung, tempestuous, imaginative as Lydia was, Craig feared the results of knowledge that the father of her future husband was an embezzler, had met his death in an effort to escape with money which he had stolen.

"She'll have to know, of course," Mary Browning said apprehensively, "but—she's shut in her room now, Craig. Something's happened again. Mal was here this afternoon—and—there was some sort of a quarrel. . . . I can't understand Lydia—but I don't believe she cares for Mal. Never have I seen an engaged girl act as she acts. Poor Mal, I'm so sorry for him."

"And I for Lydia. Her character, her up-

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bringing, her reactions are all so potent to bring great unhappiness. She will either be very happy when she comes face to face with life, or frightfully miserable. There's no middle road for Lydia."

"Poor child! She hasn't been herself for weeks."

"Something's on her mind. She acts as if something were preying on her. Heaven only knows what sort of a mess she's capable of getting herself into."

"Most of Lydia's troubles are imaginary," Mary said practically.

Craig shook his head. "No. . . . Perhaps she imagines herself into trouble sometimes—but there's a fine, strong woman buried in Lydia somewhere. There's a bigness about her, even when she's most headstrong. There's a fineness about her. She's the wonderful or the foolish sort who would submit to boiling in oil for an ideal. . . . The devil of it is that the ideal might be an absurdity."

"I'll tell you what *I* think," said Mary. "I believe she wants to break her engagement with Mal. I think she leaped into it without looking, and now she's terrified at the prospect."

Lydia was terrified at the prospect. She had arrived at a point where she abhorred the thought of giving herself to Malcolm; where she

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felt an actual, living, physical repulsion. . . . To be his wife, living under the same roof with him in the intimacy of marriage, seemed horrible, monstrous. . . . But she had given her word. Over and over she declared to herself that she could not, would not break it. . . . This repetition, the necessity for bolstering up her will was an unmistakable sign of weakening.

On that very afternoon Malcolm had come directly from his train to the house, eager to be with her, filled with hope that he would find a change, that she would be kinder, sweeter to him. He had brooded over the matter until he had worked himself into a state of passionate excitement, into a condition of mind which did not promise diplomacy or self-restraint. It was no humor in which to seek out Lydia Canfield.

He waited for her in the parlor, impatiently; his humor growing more difficult as Lydia delayed. With boyish lack of understanding—with that lack of understanding which has killed many a marriage in the first days of the honeymoon—he insisted to himself that as Lydia's *fiancé* he had certain rights upon which it was his duty to insist—which it would be unmanly, weak, for him to forego. She was to be his wife, and it was her duty to conduct herself toward him in the manner which his reading of romance had informed him was correct. . . . He com-

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pressed his lips, told himself he was very stern and righteous, and girded up his loins to demand his due. . . . Then Lydia appeared in the door.

She was lovely—the lovelier for a certain wanness, a trace of pallor; for the scarce-discernible shadows under her eyes. She was a picture of desire, vivid even in the extreme pensiveness which rested upon her. The suddenness of her appearance, the loveliness of the unheralded vision fired Malcolm's veins. . . . He forgot everything save her desirability, his hunger to hold her in his arms and to subject her lips to the touch of his passion.

Before she could be warned to draw back, Mal strode across the room and clutched her in his arms, roughly, baldly, crudely. It was a seizure, a violation—an idiocy. He crushed her to him with trembling, hot arms, and despite her sudden wild struggles to free herself, he kissed her lips, her eyes, her hair, her throat. . . . And then, the fire having spent its force in explosion, he stood appalled, frightened, holding her because he did not know how to let her go.

Lydia tore herself away and stood an instant white as the lace in the window behind her, white except for her lips which burned a curious carmine, and her eyes which blazed with a light which was impossibly green—the green of trapped fury. She stood rigid, immovable, as if

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turned to ice by her sense of outrage. . . . Then she seemed to think, to realize, to become a human girl, capable of ordinary human emotions and actions. . . . The change was swift, startling, not without its elements of youthful comedy, for she stepped forward a pace and deliberately, with the gesture of an angry child, she slapped Malcolm across the mouth. . . . Mal gave back a step, even as in childhood he had been used to seek safety from her sudden tempers in flight. . . . She did not follow, but, having slapped him, became very still again, motionless. Then she rubbed her cheek, her lips with her hand, as though to remove something repulsive to her skin, did it slowly, thoroughly. . . . This action seemed to call her to herself, for she drew a deep breath which sounded like a gasp of pain. Her face paled and then flushed. Strangely, even then, she felt deep within her a relief, a breaking of something which she desired to have broken . . . and knowledge came to her—the knowledge that she had attempted the impossible, that she could never give herself to Malcolm Crane; could never, never again endure his touch nor submit her soul to the impiety of his caresses. . . .

“Go,” she said, her voice a hard, cold whisper. “Go! . . . Go! . . . Go! . . . Never—never come again. . . . Never! . . .”

“Lydia!”

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She stamped her foot, for a moment seeming like her old elfin self. "I hate you . . . I despise you," she cried, and then not waiting for him to obey, she fled from the room—out of his life. It seemed as if leaving that room was in effect a bursting out of his life into a freedom of her own. Up the stairs she flew to the sanctuary of her room, there to sit down, cold, tense, gasping. She did not sob; she shed no tear, but with hands clutching her temples remained with eyes fixed on vacancy for minute after minute, until the minutes strung together into hours. . . . Mary Browning summoned her to supper. . . . She would not answer.

So it was not until the calmer next day that she was told of Judge Crane's death, and of the matters which contributed to it—and of Angus Burke's part therein. She listened apathetically until Angus's name was spoken; then she listened tensely, apprehensively, with eyes that brightened or darkened under the play of her emotions.

"What—what do people say of him? . . . Do they blame him?" she asked.

"*Blame* him!" Mary Browning's voice lifted with her astonishment at the question. "The idea! Rainbow has made a hero of him." Then, as the irony of it struck her afresh, "Because he saved Rainbow's *money*," she said with a trace

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of bitterness. "Nobody cared how finely he lived; nobody gave a thought to the splendid fight he has made. He was still Angus Burke—to be looked at askance. He was still—oh, he would always have been—" she hesitated for a word—"tolerated, if this hadn't happened. They couldn't see, and didn't want to see. Nobody cared—until he saved their money. . . . And now he's a hero. Everything's forgotten because he brought back their nasty hoarded pennies and nickels and dollars."

And so it was. The verdict of the post office was in Angus's favor. There were many versions, as there were many people. Indeed it is doubtful if any citizen of Rainbow knew exactly what had happened—except that their savings had been preserved for them, and that Angus Burke had done it. Since the tale had first spread from Gene Goff's lips while yet Angus was in pursuit of the Judge it had been enlarged, garbled, distorted—but the one fact stood out distinct and admirable in every telling—the money was safe. . . . And so Angus Burke came into his own at last, not through greatness of soul; not through fineness under trials; not because of the splendidness of his accomplishment, but because eight out of ten residents of the town were not the poorer because of his decision and promptness and readiness. He was

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a hero, a greater hero than he who risks life to save life. He had hazarded death—according to some stories—to save their money. They were grateful, hysterically, absurdly grateful. Had Angus appeared, it would have taken but the suggestion to set the crowd to cheering for him. . . . But Angus did not appear.

"I never was one of them that held ag'in Angus," said Druggist Ramsay righteously.

"Wa-al, I admit," said Butcher Pratt, "that I was kind of skeptical of him, but from the first I says to my wife, says I, 'The's good in that boy if it kin be fetched out.' Them was my i-dential words. . . . And it's been fetched out, by Dad!"

"Crane's doin's," said another. "He was allus pursuin' and henderin' the boy, and keepin' public opinion het up. Wa-al, the boy was too much fer him in the end of it. . . . I never set much store by Crane anyhow. . . ."

And so it went. Angus Burke. . . . Angus Burke. . . . On the street, at the dinner table, in church, everywhere, his name flew back and forth, a conversational shuttlecock, and with every rebound the legend of it expanded and magnified, and through constant polishing grew the brighter. In that day he dominated Rainbow. The people rubbed their eyes, opened them in surprise to find Angus an imposing figure, full-developed, lacking in nothing. From neg-

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ligibility he sprang in a night to giant's stature. Rainbow capitulated; its walls fell amid rejoicings, and its inhabitants gave Angus a triumph.

All this came to batter upon the ramparts of Lydia's will during the next few passing days. It was as though all Rainbow had chosen to agree against her judgment of him; as if Rainbow had become his champion to fight for him before the court of her heart. Rainbow conspired together, it seemed, to lift Angus high above the mire of his origin, to adulate him, to set him upon a pinnacle. . . . And now Lydia strove not only against her heart but against reason—against a thing more difficult to conquer: her stubbornness.

One phase of his conduct stood prominent and glowing before her eyes. She cared little for that side of the matter which had won Rainbow, but his magnanimity, what she saw as magnanimity, moved and shook her. Angus had tried to save Judge Crane, his ancient enemy; had not sought in the moment of his power to retaliate for years of bitterness and cruelty. . . . He had tried to save the Judge, and that he had not succeeded was no fault of his. . . . She endowed him with a greatness of soul, when the thing he had possessed was nothing more nor less than a sense of duty—not to Crane but to his employer. Perhaps this had been fine—it was fine. But Lydia raised it to a sublimity. . . . She glori-

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fied Angus, gloried in her love for him . . . but still would not surrender. "I can't . . . I can't," she said distractedly. "What he *is* cannot destroy what he *was*."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

ON Sunday afternoons it was the custom for Dave Wilkins and Angus Burke to take long walks together; it was their day; for them exclusively, and both looked forward to it through the days of the week. On this Sabbath, as dusk settled over the town they were proceeding in contented silence through the shadier, more secluded streets. Dave Wilkins was proud, he was happy, for his hour of fulfillment had come. . . . It was past the evening luncheon hour when they passed Craig Browning's house. A light shone through the windows and Craig and Mary were visible in their parlor.

"Let's drop in for a moment," Dave suggested. It was sheer vanity, the desire to show off his *protégé*, to parade Angus a bit—perhaps to hear words of praise for him.

Angus peered into the room, assured himself that Lydia was not there, and nodded his acquiescence. They were cordially received as always in the Browning home. When they were seated there fell a sort of preliminary hush.

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Their minds were filled with but one topic—Judge Crane and his affairs occupied every conversationalist in Rainbow that night. . . . Browning's first words referred to it.

Angus frowned uneasily. "Please—not that. . . . Let's not talk about that."

"Right," said Dave, "let's discuss women's fashions as exemplified in the show window of our milliner. Then we can take up crops and business and religion and reparations. Maybe you'll talk me into an editorial that will startle the nation."

And so they talked, homey, pleasant, satisfying chat—what Dave Wilkins always called "just talk," until Angus was again at his ease—as much at his ease as he could be in a house that contained Lydia Canfield, invisible though she might be.

Invisible she was. Upstairs in her room Lydia heard the arrival of callers, recognized Dave Wilkins's voice, then Angus Burke's. She listened eagerly, hungrily. He was in the same house with her. The same roof was over both their heads. . . . His voice sounded in her ears and a dozen steps would carry her to his side, to the room in which he sat, where she could see him with her eyes, touch him with her fingers if she dared. . . . She nursed the thought of such daring.

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For weeks now her nerves had been excited, taut, tingling. She had lived under a strain, under the shadow of tragedy—and Malcolm Crane's brashness had precipitated a climax. . . . His conduct had thrown him out of her life. It needed but some such occurrence to have brought this about sooner or later—or, perhaps, no occurrence whatever, for now she confessed to herself that she could never have gone through with it, never have become his wife. She hated Mal—who did not deserve it, but such is the logic of the miserable. Hers had been the blame; she had sought to use him for a purpose—a purpose which could not but make him hateful to her. . . . A prisoner comes to abhor the walls which confine him, and Lydia had used Malcolm for her confining walls—to shut her away from Angus Burke.

So she listened to Angus Burke's voice, strained her ear to catch his every word, and begrudged the others their part in the talk. His voice called to her, sung to her, urged her to come . . . to come. There was no Ulysses-wax with which to shut her ears. Her yearning to see him, to be with him, to feel his presence, wracked her like physical pain. . . . He was so near! It would be so easy.

She strained back as though a physical arm were striving to drag her to the door; she bit her

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lips; her nails cut into her palms. . . . She found herself at the door—found the urge of her heart irresistible. . . . She had no longer the will nor the desire to hold herself back. . . . Down the stairs she tottered, stood swaying in the parlor door.

“Angus! . . .” she cried. “Angus! . . .”

He was at her side in an instant, found himself there as though by magic, and she clung to him, clutching his coat with her fingers, pressing her face against his breast, sobbing his name again and again. She saw no one but Angus, was conscious of no other presence—and it was so with Angus also. . . . He drew her gently outside with the instinct of lovers to find dusky seclusion—outside into the shadows of the garden.

Angus was speechless as he was always speechless in moments when from other men would have come a torrent of words. He was experiencing a miracle and the marvel of it held him still and awe-struck. Lydia had come to him—to *him*! He held her close, tenderly, unbelievably, and waited. It was she who spoke first.

“I heard your voice. . . . I had to come. I couldn’t—bear it any longer.” She lifted her face, a pitiful, tear-streaked face which had not yet found how to reflect the happiness which was welling upward from her heart—and Angus

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kissed her. It was the first time he had ever kissed a woman. . . .

Now he struggled to find words—the right words—humble, grateful, wondering words. No human tongue could have expressed the wonder and the joy of his realization. “Lydia—I have wanted you. I have loved you, without hoping anything. . . . I can never—tell you how much I have wanted you. . . .”

“You did tell me, Angus. . . . I knew—or I could never, never have come—like this. . . . I am ashamed.”

“It was—beautiful,” he said and paused to marvel at the beauty of it. Then, “Are you sure, Lydia, sure you want *me*?”

“If you want me to want you, Angus.”

He faltered, and she loved his faltering, his lack of readiness, his reverence for her, “I—Lydia—Lydia—it’s true? You love *me*? . . . You remember everything, who I am, all that has happened—and you love *me*?”

“Yes, Angus.”

He fell silent again, but the moonlight, filtering dimly through the leaves, showed her his face. . . . It was eloquent; on it was reflected a great, deep, wonderful poem. . . . She touched his face softly with her fingers.

“I’ll make it all up to you. . . . I’ll make up for all the—the unhappiness,” she said. “Oh,

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Angus, you must love me always, always. Every day and every hour you must love me—as you do to-night.”

He spoke in a hushed, detached voice. “I’ve heard people say the word *happiness*—but I never knew what they meant by it—not until this hour.”

Even as he spoke a wracking, wrenching, horrible spasm of coughing interrupted and startled them. It was near them. . . . Someone was in the yard, almost beside them. . . . Angus stepped back from Lydia and faced the sound. The coughing ceased to be followed by an equally horrible struggle for breath—by rasping, spasmodic gasps. Then a man tottered out of the darkness and stood before them.

“I—follered you—all over town,” he said, grasping at a sapling for support and throwing back his head, as though to open to his lungs a freer passage for air—and Lydia saw his face. . . . It was a face she had not seen for more than half of her lifetime, and then but briefly, but it had seared itself upon her memory, photographed itself there in lines of horror. . . . Angus knew also. The sight of that face froze his heart, for it was the face of his father, of Titus Burke. . . .

Angus dared not look at Lydia, nor could he force himself to move or to speak. He stood

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dumbly, quivering, as if awaiting a blow. . . . Another paroxysm of coughing came and passed. Titus Burke recovered himself and leered.

"So this is Angy—my leetle Angy? My, how you've growed up. . . . Clean forgot your pa I calc'late. . . . Well, I come back to remind you."

Angus made no response. He could not speak.

"I jest got out," Titus went on. He patted his chest. "They kep' me in till I got this here cough. . . . Twelve years I served—and that hain't no joke to any man. . . . Set me free with a five-dollar bill and this here suit—so I come a-lookin' fer you—for my leetle Angy. . . ."

Lydia cowered against the shrubbery, her eyes big with horror—her lips curling with repugnance and disgust, for Titus was not a pleasant object to look upon.

"I hadn't no other place to go to," Titus said, "and I got this here cough . . . and I knowed how welcome I'd be." He leered again. "It's goin' to carry me off, but I kinder wanted to die comfortable—so I come back to give ye a chance to do your duty like a good and obedient son."

Angus spoke in a leaden voice. "I thought you were dead," he said.

"Hoped I was dead, ye mean. . . . Perty son I got. Grateful son, hain't ye? 'Shamed of your ol' pa that done so much fer ye. Livin' in hifalutin' style and rollin' in money. . . . Wa-al,

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your pa's goin' to git some of it, begrudge it or not. I'm a-goin' to git a place to lay my head and vittles and a bed to die in."

Lydia stirred. "Angus," she whispered, "come away. . . . Come away."

Titus Burke glared at her and his son through red lids. "You needn't to think you kin git away from me," he said venomously. "'Cause ye can't. I'll foller ye around. I'll call out to ye on the streets. I'll——"

"Hush," said Angus, and he reached out his hand to touch Lydia's—but she avoided his touch. . . . He looked at his father, an object in the form of a man that was an insult to Heaven! Yet that man was his *father*! The man was dying. . . . His father was dying.

Titus Burke waited, his eyes peering with malicious cunning at Angus. "I won't go 'way. I'll hang around and torment ye. . . . I'm sick and ye got to take me in, . . ." he said.

"Be still," said Angus. He turned to Lydia and saw a face of anguish.

"Angus!" she cried.

"I should have known," he said in a low voice. "I should have thought of—this. . . . I should have known. . . ."

She covered her face with her hands to shut out the sight of the man—the father of the one she loved—who would become her own father-

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in-law and the grandfather of her children. Her soul cried out in revolt. . . . The disgrace of it! To have the world point to Titus Burke as her husband's father. . . .

"I can't turn him away," Angus said dully. "He's my—father."

"Your father," she repeated after him. "*Your father* . . . Oh!"

"He's dying—old—helpless. . . . I can't—"

She raised her head. "You mean—you will take him in—let him live in Rainbow—where people will see and know?"

"I—I got to, Lydia."

She sprang away from him with fists clenched, eyes flashing as with fever. "You would take him in—*that!* To have people point to. To disgrace you—and *me!* . . . You sha'n't. . . . You sha'n't. It's horrible. Oh, Angus, send him away now—before anybody can know."

"Lydia—dear—I can't send him away. . . . He's dying."

She was calmer for a moment, laid her hand on his arm pleadingly. "Send him away, Angus. . . . I'll go into the house, and you—you send him away before I come back. . . . For me. . . . I'll—I'll pretend this never happened—that it was a—horrid dream. . . . For me, Angus. . . . Please—please!"

He shook his head.

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"Not for me? . . . Not to keep me?"

"No. . . ." He paused. "I know—I always knew—it—it was impossible."

Suddenly she pushed Angus from her. "Don't touch me. . . . Don't come near me. . . . You have your choice—me or *that!* Send him away and I'll—forget him. . . . But I won't have people see him, know he is the father of the man I am going to marry. . . . That man or me!"

"Lydia!"

"If he stays—never come near me again."

"I—I *can't* send him away."

"Not for me?"

"Not—even to keep you," he said so low she could scarcely hear him.

She stood for a moment in the midst of the shattered fragments of her happiness, stood tense, furious, broken, despairing. Then, out of her pain came cruelty. She pointed to the gate. "Go, then—and take your family with you," she said.

"Lydia!"

She turned from him, but not so quickly but that he could see the repulsion in her eyes. "Go," she said, "you have chosen."

Angus stood a moment, waiting, hoping for a relenting word, for a backward glance which would give him hope. She did not turn. In-

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exorably, stiff-backed, she walked from him and into the house.

Titus cackled. "Consid'able temper, *I'd* say," he said.

Two days later Lydia Canfield took the train East. Rainbow through the depot master learned that her ticket was purchased through to New York. . . . She left no words, said no good-bys. . . . None knew her ultimate destination or the probable duration of her absence. . . .

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

TITUS BURKE became a familiar figure on Rainbow's streets. At first he had been a nine days' wonder, but, strangely enough, there was no reaction against Angus—even when interest in his coming was at its height Rainbow seemed unable to look upon the man as Angus's father. From the beginning it disassociated the two and did not hold Titus Burke against his son. Rather than reviving the town's prejudice, it called forth its sympathy. Rainbow had been slow in making a place for Angus, but having taken him into its heart it would not displace him except for gravest cause. Rainbow was hidebound, stiff-necked in its virtues as well as in its shortcomings.

So Rainbow regarded Titus Burke as a sort of visitation, not as a flesh and blood individual; as a burden to be borne, a trial, in the scriptural sense. . . .

Titus was not a pleasing individual even in his best moments; he was sullen, morose, whining, fault-finding. Also he was exceedingly un-

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clean and it appeared to be his chief pleasure to humiliate his son by parading himself before Rainbow's eyes. He harbored a snarling, snapping, vindictive hatred for his son—a resentment against the young man's prosperity and decency. Publicly and privately he complained, accusing Angus of meannesses, harping constantly on the string that Angus was ashamed of him—and in the same breath boasting of his own iniquities. . . . His ingenuities were quite diabolical.

The resident of Rainbow who manifested the keenest interest in Titus Burke was none other than Jake Schwartz. Titus intrigued Jake and irritated him. He remembered well that meeting with Titus Burke years ago—in the presence of Lydia Canfield—when Titus had sought to drag away his son; and ever since that day, in odd moments, he had tried to fit the man into the proper slot in his memory. Jake was sure he had known Titus, sure he had worked with him, but when or where he could not recall. It ruffled Jake's truculent disposition to be thus frustrated, and he went out of his way to observe Titus, to talk to him, to scrutinize him, to pry into him.

"I tell you," he said to Bishwhang, "I've knowed that feller some'eres. You can't fool me on faces. . . ."

At last he intruded upon Titus's moroseness,

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forcing his presence upon the creature belligerently. "Say, you," he said, "I used to know you. The name of Burke don't fit you no more'n a size eleven hat would. . . . Your name wa'n't Burke then. What was it, eh? Remember me, do ye?"

Titus snarled, "Naw, I hain't never seen ye before, and I don't want to see ye ag'in."

"Feller," said Jake, "you're goin' to see me frequent, and some day, when I hain't feelin' cheerful, I'm a-goin' to give ye a choice betwixt tellin' who ye be and gittin' your turkey's neck twisted."

It was now two months since Lydia Canfield had fled from Rainbow—and still Rainbow did not know where she had gone. Not even her most intimate friends had received a line from her. . . . Angus was no wiser. He had not lifted his hand to follow her, nor his voice to remonstrate with her. From that night he never mentioned her name.

The only visible change in him was a drawing into himself. He worked, worked, worked. . . . Though often invited, he declined all invitations, and from the day of Lydia's departure Rainbow did not see him socially. It seemed as though she had taken with her in her baggage Angus's gregariousness. His nature, which had been unfolding so rapidly in the sunshine of his re-

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habilitation, now closed tightly. He became a machine, emotionless, efficient. . . . That was all that remained. He had locked up his soul.

Early in the spring Henry G. Woodhouse took him into the firm as junior partner. Angus was grateful, showed his gratitude to the best of his constricted ability, but he could take no real pleasure in what would have been a tremendous joy to him a few months before. . . . It is not strange that his friends worried for him.

For a time he had avoided even Dave Wilkins, until he saw how that conduct hurt his friend. During those days he relied upon Bishwhang for companionship as he had done in the old days. The human side of him seemed to have relapsed a dozen years. . . . In those first days Bishwhang had been the stronger of the two; his love had watched over Angus, his clumsy hand had guided, his silence had comforted, and his solicitude had, perhaps, saved Angus. . . . During these hours Angus was building a wall of reserve behind which he was to hide, and not even Dave Wilkins was permitted to have a full view of what those walls contained.

He accepted his father's presence and his father's malice phlegmatically—perhaps wondering now and then at the man's malicious vagaries. . . . One phase of his father's conduct did puzzle him, and that was the man's apparent

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fear of Henry G. Woodhouse. This Angus noticed first on an evening when Henry G. drove up to the door of the cottage Angus had taken to house himself and his father. Titus, sitting in the window, saw the approach of his son's employer, and trembling, he sprang to his feet and rushed from the house, not to return until a late hour of the night. . . . Twice after this similar unaccountable conduct puzzled Angus. He decided it was merely some mental symptom of the man's physical condition.

Titus's cough persisted—during the winter seemed to grow worse and worse. "He hain't got long to live," Dr. Knipe informed Angus, "and a doggone good thing, *I* say." Titus continued steadily to travel down the hill, and though he was still able to be about, it was not difficult to foretell that the end was approaching. Even Titus himself realized this—and his terror at the realization was a dreadful thing to live with. At this time he took to sitting much in an armchair on the sunny porch, and there it was Jake Schwartz's habit to repair at frequent intervals.

Titus and Jake became friends of a sort. Titus looked forward to Jake's visits with the anticipation of a malicious man who enjoys thwarting another's desire. Jake came and came with a grim determination to have his curiosity satisfied.

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"I'm a-goin' to figger it out yit," Jake always said as he took his departure. "I'll remember you 'fore I'm done."

"You won't," declared Titus, "'cause you hain't never seen me before."

Jake cross-questioned Titus, but the man was close-mouthed and guarded, not without a certain malign shrewdness. Not a word could be had from him which related to his life before he had come to Rainbow with his wife and child. From that date he was willing to describe his vicissitudes and to boast of his accomplishments—but all that day before his coming was a shut book which he would not open.

Jake baited traps with the names of towns he had worked in, but Titus avoided the pitfalls until, one day, Jake mentioned inadvertently the name of Springfield, Massachusetts. Suddenly he slapped his thigh, "There's where it was, feller," he said to Titus. "I was workin' as journeyman printer fer Ol' Somers—twenty-seven, twenty-eight year ago—mebby more. You remember Ol' Somers? There's where it was! You was stickin' type in that shop—and suthin else. What else had I ought to remember about ye? . . . And your name wa'n't Burke . . . I know, you was always a-playin' the races . . . I got you that fur, hain't I, friend?"

"You lie. . . . You lie. I hain't never been

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in Springfield," snarled Titus, but Jake saw fear in his eyes.

"You was, and you was kind of dressy then, a reg'lar dude. Could talk like it, too. . . . Oh, I'm onto your track now, ol' rooster, and I'll git you perty soon."

Next morning in the printing shop Jake was boasting of his success to Dave Wilkins. "Burke wa'n't his name then," said Jake. "Funny sort of first name it was, too. I remember it was a kind of a onusual one."

"If you recall it," said Dave, "bring it to me. Don't mention it to anybody else. Angus has enough on his shoulders without having any new rascality of his father's dug up out of the past."

"Me! . . . Say, I wouldn't mention nothin' to nobody—not for money, not for cash money paid into my hand," Jake declared, and then he stopped, open-mouthed. "Cash money. . . . Cash money. . . . *Cash!* That's it, that's what I been tryin' to remember. Cash his name was. Cassius was his identical name."

Cash! That name was vaguely familiar, irritatingly suggestive to Dave Wilkins. It carried a significance with it, but what? What did the name of Cash carry on its back? What ought he to connect with the classic name of Cæsar's enemy? . . . Nor could Jake attach a family name to it. "Seems like we jest called him Cash

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mostly. Didn't have much need fer last names in the shop." But perhaps a week later he rushed upstairs to Dave Wilkins's room and burst through the door. "I got it," he shouted. "By Ginger! I got that off'm my mind at last." He scowled fiercely in his delight. "I got his dog-gone name. Hughes, that's what it was. *Cash Hughes*."

"*Cash Hughes!*" Dave swung around from his desk, leaped to his feet, and stood staring at Jake. "Did you say Cash Hughes? . . . Are you sure, Jake—sure?"

"Sure as preachin'."

"But it can't be—it can't be," said Dave. "Such things don't happen. . . . Don't mention this to a soul, Jake. Shut your teeth over it and clamp them. . . . Go away now, and let me think. . . . I've got to think."

In an hour Dave was seated in Craig Browning's office; his lean face was drawn, but his eyes were very bright, bright with unwonted excitement. "Craig," he said, "Jake Schwartz has remembered what Titus Burke's name used to be. . . . It was Cash Hughes!"

Craig looked puzzled. "Yes. . . . What about it?"

"You don't know? . . . That's true, you moved here after it happened. . . . Craig, Cash Hughes was here twenty-eight years ago. . . .

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He is the man who ran away with Kate Woodhouse!"

"Kate Woodhouse! . . . Henry G.'s daughter?"

"Yes."

The significance of the statement did not pierce to Craig's consciousness for a moment; then he leaned forward, as tense as his friend, as filled with excitement.

"Then—then you think——"

"What else is there to think? . . . What brought them back to Rainbow. . . . What other boy would they have with them? . . . But the thing is to prove it, Craig—to *prove* it. We must prove it before we utter a word to anybody. There might be some mistake."

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . ."

"You're in command," said Dave.

"In that case," said Craig, "we'll pay a call on Titus Burke." His voice was grim, determined. It boded unpleasantness for Titus should he prove obdurate.

Presently Craig said, "Dave, we mustn't get our hearts set on this thing. On the face of it it looks to me to be difficult, if not impossible, to establish Angus as Henry G.'s grandson. Even if Titus admits he is Cassius Hughes and that Angus is Kate's son, we are still far from proofs which would be acceptable in a court of

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law. Do you believe any court would credit Titus Burke's unsupported statement—especially with the money involved that is involved here?"

Dave shrugged his shoulders.

"Again," Craig went on, "why has Titus concealed the relationship all these years? Why, when she came here years ago did not Kate—if it was Kate—go to her father?"

"Reason is with you," Dave said, "but my conviction is firm. I feel it in my bones. . . ."

"There's our man on the porch," said Craig, "and if I'm any judge the time we have to work with him will be short. He won't be here many days."

Titus Burke, wrapped in a quilt, was sitting in an armchair in the sun. He eyed their approach speculatively, apprehensively, with narrowed, watery eyes; and as they turned in at the gate he drew back in his chair with a motion like that of a snapping-turtle withdrawing into its shell.

Craig was direct. "We won't ask you to talk much, Burke," he said, "but there are a few questions you must answer."

Titus snarled. "Don't go pesterin' a man when he 's so sick he kin scarcely git his breath. . . ."

"Your son has been good to you," said Craig. "Have you no gratitude?"

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"He done no more 'n he was bound to—and he begrutched it—every mite of it. Ashamed of his ol' daddy. Fine son, to be ashamed of his own pa."

"Yes, you are his father, Burke. But who was his mother? What was her name?"

"None of your business."

"Was your name Cassius Hughes?"

Titus strangled, coughed, clenched and unclenched his bony claws, and spat at them like a cat. "'Twa'n't. Never heard of that name."

"Was your wife's name Kate Woodhouse?"

"Wife's name was Burke," he said with a leer.

"Is Angus Kate Woodhouse's son?"

"He's my son," said Titus.

"Burke," said Browning, "you're going to die . . . to die, do you understand. Maybe to-night. . . . Aren't you afraid to die?"

Burke croaked horribly, wriggled in his chair, and his eyes rolled back until the bleared whites became visible. It was terror, stark, awful terror—but he did not speak.

"Do you want to die," Craig demanded inexorably, "without one decent act to stand upon?"

"I—don't know nothin' about—what you're jawin' about," Titus said stubbornly. "Go 'way.

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. . . Lemme be. I never heard of—sich folks.
. . . Go 'way. . . .”

They went, but they were to return before another dawn, for that afternoon Dr. Knipe declared that Titus could not live through the night. . . . Dave and Browning consulted with Alvin Trueman—and to the minister was delegated the task of a final effort to wring the truth from Burke's stubborn, vindictive lips. . . . He it was who sat by Titus's bedside as the useless, wasted, squalid life ebbed away. . . .

“Titus,” he said, “I've something to tell you—something you will not wish to hear, but it must be told. . . . You have come to the end.”

Titus opened wide his eyes and stared at the minister—a hoarse, fearful whisper reached Trueman's ears.

“No . . . 'tain't so. . . . You're lyin' to me.”

“As God is above us, Titus, I am telling you the truth.”

Burke's face twisted horribly—a grimace of that sort of terror which twists and wrings the soul. “Be I goin' to—die—to-night?” . . . Gawd! . . . I dassent . . . I dassent. . . .”

Trueman, sitting beside the bed, spoke to that vexed, unworthy soul, doing his duty as a man of God to soothe, to comfort, to soften—to bring Titus Burke's heart to suppliant posture. . . . He sought to assuage a terror which was abject,

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obscene. He writhed, he cried out—but there was no comfort, no ear to which he could cry for mercy. . . . A word of Alvin's caught his ear, "Make your peace with God. . . ." To make peace he could understand; to make his peace with a human being—to come to an arrangement, an amicable settlement of differences. . . . But he was not going into the power of a God who hated him. Titus knew God hated him. . . . He pictured God in this first moment in years which he had given up to a consideration of Divinity, as a God capable of hatred and of revenge—of some awful, mysterious revenge far beyond the power of the most malignant mortal hands to visit upon him. . . . To make his peace with God—to reach a composition with this Being—to dicker—to save himself from tortures which he could only visualize as physical! . . .

"How? . . . How? . . ." he gasped.

Alvin explained patiently, gently, the theory of his religion; the promise of repentance—the guarantee of repentance by the performance of a righteous act. . . . Titus did not wait for him to finish. To his fevered mind it seemed an opportunity was offered him to trade his secret with God for his release from torture. . . . "I'll swap! . . . I'll swap!" he cried. "I'll tell—fetch Wilkins. Fetch Browning."

"But repentance——"

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Titus uttered an oath. "Quick! . . ." he panted.

And so, on the lip of death, Titus Burke told his story, told the truth—and substantiated his words. Hidden away, carried with him for years with that curious persistence people exhibit in clinging to certain objects, certain reminders, was an old leathern wallet—and in the wallet were documents, marriage license, certificate, the birth certificate of Angus Burke. . . . There was a picture of Titus and Kate Woodhouse taken in the first flush of their elopement. . . . By confession and by documents Titus Burke established beyond peradventure that Angus Burke was the legitimate son of Kate Woodhouse, the grandson of Henry G.! . . .

Titus Burke died before daylight. He did not die at peace, with Christian fortitude. True, he had made his confession, had dickered with God, but in no spirit of abnegation, with no humbling of heart or prostration of soul. . . . What he had done had been by way of a bribe to the Almighty. . . .

The news was communicated first to Henry G. Woodhouse. Craig and Dave laid before him the facts and proofs. . . . What shock of joy, what rebirth of faith and confidence in the excellence of his Creator came to Henry G. no man may say—for he retired to his room, there to

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remain in privacy—alone with his own thoughts and his God—while Craig and Dave waited without. . . .

After an hour he appeared, and his face was a face of peace; his joy was piteous. . . . “I—I want to tell him,” he said tremulously. “I want to—tell my boy! . . .”

He called to Angus, who stood surprised, expectant in the presence of his three best friends. . . . Henry G., eager as a child, glowing with happiness, sought to find roundabout words—to approach the truth without baldness. . . . But he spoke baldly; could find no words but bald, direct words.

“Angus—Angus—I have learned—we have learned—that my daughter—was your mother.”

Angus did not speak, did not go to his grandfather, but turned and walked slowly to the window like one in a dream, and stood there blindly. . . . Henry G. would have followed him, but Dave Wilkins touched his arm. “Wait,” he said, “give him time.”

Presently, it may have been five minutes, it may have been less, for at such a moment time crawls on leaden feet, Angus turned and came back to them. He searched his grandfather's face with questioning eyes, and as the old gentleman held out his hand in welcome Angus grasped

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it. . . . "I'm glad, . . ." he said. That was all, but it sufficed. . . .

"And I," said Henry G., with the tremulous joy of old age, "am glad, my boy—and proud. . . . My God, how proud!"

CHAPTER THIRTY

LYDIA CANFIELD was in Paris with her Greataunt Margaret. Paris had not been her destination when she left Rainbow—in fact she had had no definite objective, except that of escape. Where she went she did not care, so long as she was putting miles between her and her home. She was fleeing in a panic—she did not dare look behind her. . . . Lydia could see nothing, could think of nothing but Titus Burke; the man obsessed her; his every word, his every feature, every shambling movement of his unsightly body was engraved upon her memory. . . . But above all other things was one more dreadful than the rest: in Titus Burke she had seen, unmistakably, undeniably, a physical resemblance to Angus. . . .

Her greataunt, a stately, severe old lady who had lived abroad these forty years, received her when at last she came to France, and took her home. She did not ask questions, needed to ask none to be certain that Lydia had sought her as a refuge from disaster. . . . And so, being a

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splendid, firm-minded, understanding old lady, she welcomed Lydia casually, made her comfortable, and did not allude in any way to the strangeness of her niece's coming for many days.

Greataunt Margaret was one of those abrupt, sententious, masterful women, not a little eccentric, who impress one with their high vitality and their capacity to command anything from a dining room to a man-of-war. She was a lady of a sort we seldom see to-day, but that was more prone to show itself in the eighties. She was of the stock of women who had crossed the mountains into the wilderness of Kentucky or of Ohio, hardy, capable, lofty of character. She was a gentlewoman—not of the people; yet she did not look down upon the recent developments of science and of society as might have been expected. She was not conservative, but rather an enthusiast—remaining herself always original, individual. However much she may have approved of innovation, changes, inventions for others, they were not for her—that passed her without touching the hem of her skirt. . . .

“Lydia Canfield,” she said abruptly when, one day, they were seated in the library overlooking the Parc Monceau, “tell me about it.”

Lydia looked up quickly; her hand fluttered to her heart and then dropped to her lap; she lowered her face to hide from her aunt the taut-

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ening of her features. In a moment she replied so faintly her voice scarcely reached Miss Canfield's ears. "Not now. . . . Not now. . . ."

"You've got to talk pretty soon. It's bound to come out of you. Things can't be kept pent up. . . . Just start in—like that!"

Still Lydia could not bring herself to speak.

"The usual thing, I suppose—man!" said Miss Canfield, clipping her words.

"It's—— Oh, it's not what you think . . . no fault of his. He was good—good. . . . I——" Lydia caught herself, raised her eyes, and Aunt Margaret saw in them startled surprise. With a little gasp Lydia continued, "I love him—even now."

"H'm—most do," said Aunt Margaret, "whether they deserve it or not."

Then the story came, came easily, rapidly, pell-mell as the relief of expression, of putting her woes into words, overcame Lydia—it came in a torrent of words, sobs, exclamations, which jostled, tumbled, hurried each other to be out. It was as if the walls of some reservoir had collapsed, suddenly releasing a flood which nothing could stop or turn aside. Aunt Margaret listened unemotionally, now and again tapping the arm of her chair with a thimble.

"So I couldn't stay," Lydia finished. "I couldn't bear to see him again . . . I couldn't

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stay another hour in the town with that awful man. . . . I came away—without saying—good-by. . . .”

She buried her face in the cushions of the sofa and sobbed—sobbed. It was the first time, since leaving Rainbow, that she had given way to her grief.

Presently Greataunt Margaret, after puckering her brows and drumming on her chair-arm with ever-present thimble, said abruptly:

“You’re a fool. . . . You’re unstrung, and no woman in love has sense anyhow. . . . I’ll keep you in Paris a while and—and then maybe I’ll tinker with things. . . . I’ll see what’s best to be done.”

The old lady did not allude to the matter again for weeks, nor did Lydia. However Great-aunt Margaret wrote a long letter to Craig Browning and had, in due course, a reply, giving her a faithful history of Angus Burke, together with such summing up of his character as might have been expected from a friend who loved and admired. She read it carefully, not once but several times—and concealed the fact of its receipt from Lydia. . . . She was considering what was best to be done; how to act herself; how to advise Lydia. Greataunt Margaret’s mental processes were deliberate, and a certain problem was involved, a certain course of action

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under consideration, which she could not solve without grave and prolonged reflection. . . . She was not one to reach an important conclusion in a day.

Lydia was not happy; she was not even contented. Life held no interest for her, and it was with the greatest difficulty her aunt persuaded her to go abroad at all in the most fascinating city in the world. If Lydia had been permitted her own way, she would have seen no more of Paris than was visible from the window of her bedroom. She was, to tell the truth, homesick—homesick for Rainbow—and heartsick, soul-sick for Angus Burke. . . .

Her case seemed hopeless to her, as hopeless as if she were a prisoner in Paris and Angus a prisoner in Rainbow. . . . Titus Burke was the jailer who kept them apart with bolts and bars; kept them apart more inexorably than stone walls could have done. . . . The sight of Burke, his vague, but none the less dreadful resemblance to his son, arose before her hourly. . . . It made Angus repugnant to her, and yet she was sick for the want of him. It was a paradox. She loved Angus, yet the very thought of committing her life to his hands, of living with him under the same roof, in the full knowledge of Rainbow, filled her with sickening aversion. . . . It was not logical, not rational, perhaps. . . . Her

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Greataunt saw that something must be done, and done quickly. . . .

There were moments, almost happy moments, when Lydia persuaded herself that nothing mattered save Angus and her love for him; that nothing in the world could embitter the joy of seeing him again, of being with him, touching him, caressing him—of mothering and of comforting him. . . . But these periods were brief, to be followed by long days of depression and heartache.

Poor Lydia! She was caught in a net not of her own weaving. The knife which cuts the meshes of such a net must oftentimes wound the prisoner it releases. For weeks Greataunt Margaret had been debating the advisability of inflicting such a wound. The knife was ready to her hand, but what use to free the prisoner if the freeing left her maimed forever? . . . She reached her decision only after sleepless nights and troubled days. She believed in the efficacy of prayer and in the sturdiness of the blood which flowed in Lydia's veins. Because Lydia was a Canfield Aunt Margaret dared to use the knife. Perhaps an element of fatality entered into the matter.

"If she's any good," Aunt Margaret said to herself, "she'll come through it. If she isn't——"

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She shrugged her shoulders mentally . . . and called Lydia to her.

"My dear," she said more abruptly even than was her ordinary habit, "sit down—there. You have been in my mind constantly. I have taken steps . . . done what I thought best. Your young man, I learn, is all that can be desired—personally. The thing which keeps you from him is his father. . . . A father who may be dead and out of the way before you can get home again. Am I right? Answer me."

"Oh, Auntie, let's not speak of it. . . . It's all over. . . . Oh, I'm so miserable. . . ."

"Maybe we can mend that. We'll see. Because Angus Burke has a degraded father you can't live with him. He's tainted. Something must be wrong with him. . . . Criminal father—Canfield pride. Um. . . . I knew your grandmother well. Paris was none too distant from her and her family, family, family—always family. Now think, do you feel anything wrong with you? Is there any flaw in you, any defect that makes you unfit to marry any man in the world?"

"I—I don't understand."

"Any—er—hereditary defect? Like this Burke boy's?"

"How could there be?"

"Umph! . . . Well, my dear, you're in for a

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shock, so you might as well get it and have it over with. . . . I'm old enough to know things. I've learned. One thing I know is that every man should stand, and should be allowed to stand on his own feet, by himself, to be judged on his own showing. It is what a man is that matters, not what his father was nor his grandfather. Father might be a saint—son a reprobate. This Burke boy, from what I can learn, is all man. . . . I only hope he's big enough to take you back. . . . I wouldn't. . . .”

“I—can't go back. . . . You can't make me go back.”

“Little idiot! . . . You're going back because you have no reason for staying—not on the score of fathers, anyway. What do you know about your father?”

The question startled Lydia. What did she know about her father? He was only a vague memory to her, seen in earliest childhood, absent thenceforward, and mysterious until the day of his death. . . . What did she know of him? “Nothing,” she answered faintly.

“Hum. . . . No. . . . Well, I'm going to tell you something about him. I'm going to drag out the family skeleton—just to show you that your flesh is human flesh and not made of some ethereal stuff that lifts you up close to the angels. . . . Your grandfather and his wife contrived to

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keep it a secret from that miserable little town."

Lydia was sitting stiffly erect, lips parted, fists clenched in her lap. She was frightened, and her eyes were fearfully upon her Greataunt Margaret's eyes. . . .

"Your father," said her aunt in a dry, crackling voice, "was an habitual criminal . . . incorrigible. He died in prison—in California. . . ."

"Oh! . . ." said Lydia. She stood up swaying. "Oh! . . . Oh! . . ." She swayed toward Greataunt Margaret, sank to her knees before the old lady and buried her face in that ample lap. The old lady sat motionless, her hand resting on Lydia's head—praying for the successful outcome of her operation. . . .

The vagaries, the phenomena, of the mind and heart are amazing, beyond comprehension. Every day we are astounded by some prank of our psychic mechanism—and now Lydia was amazed, confused, nonplussed, ashamed to discover that after the impact had been sustained, her sensations were not of horror, of shame, of self-detestation, but of joy. . . . Of joy! Her world was tumbled about her ears; the teachings upon which the philosophy of her life was based were a mass of lies. . . . Family—there had been no family. She had been brought up on lies—on lies which had concealed the family's

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shame. . . . After a time—in quieter mood—she would be hurt, grieved, might even weep for a father whose misfortunes, whose very self had been unknown to her—but now she could not grieve. . . . But never, and she knew it with a definiteness which nothing could shake, never would she be ashamed. . . . She was herself, for herself, of herself—nothing could touch her which had not its source in her own soul. . . . It was a truth which burst upon her, a truth without which life would have been impossible to her. . . . She knew herself; knew she was worthy; knew no defilement had passed on to her from acts of her forebears. . . . If this were true of herself, then it was true of Angus Burke. . . . She lifted her face, and it was radiant. Greataunt Margaret gasped in astonishment. . . . Lydia spoke, “I’m going back. . . . I’m going back to him,” she said. . . .

That very hour Lydia and her aunt commenced their preparations to return to Rainbow. “I won’t tell him I’m coming,” Lydia said joyfully again and again. “I’m a surprise. . . . I’ll—I’ll come as a surprise. . . .”

Greataunt Margaret only wrinkled her patrician nose and wondered.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

A COOL breeze—one of those breezes with which the State of Michigan delights its inhabitants in the month of September—blew through the open bank window behind Gene Goff. Gene filled his lungs with it and turned his face that it might pass across his heated cheeks. He stretched his arms high above his head and yawned. . . . The gesture was arrested in mid-career, the yawn came to an untimely, unsatisfying end. Gene's mouth remained open and he all but fell over backward from his tall stool, for entering the bank door were two women, one old, one young and very lovely—and that one, his eyes told him, was Lydia Canfield. . . . He could not believe his eyes. Even when Lydia approached the grating and smiled as only Lydia could smile, his astonishment was not abated sufficiently to allow of the ordinary function of speech.

"Is Mr. Burke in?" Lydia asked timidly.

Gene closed his mouth with a click and nodded vigorously in the affirmative—jerked his thumb

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with permission toward Angus's door. . . . Lydia flushed, glanced apprehensively at the door, and turned for reinforcement to her great-aunt.

"Stop your gawping, young man," said that imposing old lady, "and show us in. . . . No, you go alone, Lydia. That 'll be best. I'll come when—and *if*—you want me."

Lydia walked hesitatingly to Angus's door and rapped timidly. His voice summoned her to enter—that voice which she had so yearned to hear. She turned the knob, pushed open the door and stepped within, flushed, trembling, happy, expectant . . . apprehensive. Now that she was actually coming into Angus's presence she was afraid for the first time, fearful of what reception he might grant her. . . . Yet she was so eager to see him, had so counted the hours until she could reach him. . . . She stood just within the door waiting piteously.

"Angus," she said. "Angus. . . ."

She could see Angus's hand quiver as it rested upon the arm of his chair; his eyes gazed at her hungrily; spots of white appeared at the corners of his jaw under the muscular tension. . . . He stared at her, neither speaking nor moving.

"Angus," she said again softly, "I've come back—to you—if you want me."

Even now he did not move or speak, but con-

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tinued to stare at her with a queer, unwelcoming, fixed stare. She drew a quick breath of fright. How he was acting! How cold he was, and unresponsive! Where was his joy at sight of her, his glad welcome? There was no rushing to greet her, no enfolding in his arms, no murmured rapture such as she had pictured. . . . Angus only sat as one frozen and gave her that strange, level, forbidding stare.

"Angus," she said a third time, "don't—don't you want me?"

He drew his shoulders together, clutched his coat and loosed it again. Then he stood up, took one step toward her, and halted. When he spoke his voice was without life, leaden, dull, barren of all emotion.

"You're not coming back to me," he said, "not to Angus Burke. . . . You're coming back to the family I've found." It was only by a tremendous effort, visible to Lydia, that he kept control of himself. Presently he commenced to speak again. "If you had come before I would have been glad—*glad*. I would have known it was to *me*—because you could forget everything in your love for me. . . . But you did not come—until I was no longer Angus Burke. You left me because my father found me—you have come back because I have found my grandfather. . . ."

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Lydia did not understand; her eyes opened wide with fear and pain. What did he mean? What was this talk of grandfathers and of coming before? Before what? . . . But one thing she comprehended: Angus was refusing to receive her. . . .

Her pride was dead; nothing but love remained, and she could plead with him, plead for her love and for her happiness. "I could not stay away any longer," she said. . . . "I have been miserable . . . I have wanted you, Angus. . . . Oh, how I have wanted you! . . ."

He shook his head. "You did not come. You didn't even write. You gave me no word, not a word to pin a hope upon—while things were as they were. . . . You didn't care. . . . But now this—this news reaches you. You hear who I am, what blood is mine and what family I have the right to claim . . . and that brings you back. . . . But I am the same. Nothing has changed me. I am still Angus Burke, the same flesh and blood and mind and heart—unchanged. . . . Titus Burke was my father. I do not see how it can make a difference who my mother was. . . . No. . . . You should not have come. . . . I could respect you before—when you—were true to—what you believed. . . ."

"Angus . . . Angus . . . what are you talk-

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ing about? I don't understand you. What has happened?"

Angus smiled, not bitterly, but with a sort of dumb resignation. "We can't start over again—not now. You—went away. You would have stayed away if I had remained nothing but Titus Burke's son—the son of a thief, the son of a man whose presence you couldn't bear. . . ." His voice rose a trifle with the effort he put into the control of it. "But I am the same. I tell you I am different in nothing. I am Angus Burke. . . . Because I have found a family, because I chance to be somebody now whose grandfather and great-grandfather were men to be proud of . . . that doesn't alter me. . . . Nor because I will some day be rich. . . . That's the point, Lydia. You aren't coming back to me, because you love me, because you need me—but because my grandfather is Henry G. Woodhouse and my mother was his daughter. . . . I cannot take you back. It wouldn't be fair . . . to myself." He opened and shut his hands. "If only you had come—before. . . ."

Lydia rested against the door for support, fumbled at the knob. . . . This was terrible, unbelievable, unthinkable. . . . She did not understand what had happened in spite of his words, and she would have gone on her knees to him had she thought it would have availed, but she

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knew him; knew his will, the strength of his resolutions and his immovability from a position which he believed to be right. Nothing could help her now, nothing could give back to her the happiness she had thrown away. His mind was made up—he would not take her back into his heart. . . . His love for her was dead. . . .

She opened the door, tottered out of the room, and hurried blindly toward Greataunt Margaret. . . . Her brain was in a turmoil, a confused mass of misunderstandings, miscomprehensions, vexed her. His words, save those relating to herself, she had not comprehended—his words of finding a family, of grandfathers and of wealth. . . . All she realized was that she stood rejected, was not to be taken back—would never be his wife as she had dreamed. She threw her arms about Greataunt Margaret's neck and sobbed, openly and unashamed. "He won't have me. . . . He's sending me away . . . sending me away."

"Huh," Greataunt Margaret snorted. "What I expected. What any self-respecting man would do. . . . Sit down. *I'll* see him now."

She placed Lydia in a chair and went herself to Angus's door which she opened without ceremony and entered without permission.

"Mr. Burke," she said abruptly, "I'm Lydia's greataunt and I've come all the way from Paris

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to get this thing straightened out. I'm a meddling old woman, and I glory in it. I'm an old woman, and that means a great deal, young man. . . . Lydia says you won't take her back." She flicked the last sentence at Angus with disconcerting suddenness.

Angus shook his head. "No," he said dully. "I can't take her back."

"Why?"

After a moment's hesitation Angus replied. "You know why Lydia went away. It was because my family was—not—— It was because my father, just released from prison, came to me—to die. I wouldn't, couldn't turn him out. . . . If she had come back in a month, two months, I—it would have been all right. But she didn't come. She waited for my father to die. She waited until she heard who my mother was. That's why she came back. It wasn't for me. . . . It was only because I am Henry G. Woodhouse's grandson. . . . So, you see, I couldn't take her back."

"Henry G. Woodhouse's grandson!" Great-aunt Margaret's expression was one of such genuine astonishment as to be beyond questioning. "What are you talking about, young man?"

Angus regarded her gravely, questioningly. She did not appear to be a woman who would make a lying pretense of ignorance, or who would

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act a part. To Angus she looked what she was, an aristocratic old lady, a willful old lady, an old lady who would be above meanness or intrigue, and who would sacrifice much for the thing called honor. She forestalled his reply.

"Do you mean that something has happened since Lydia went away? That—but how could you be Henry G.'s grandson? It's impossible."

"His daughter was my father's wife," said Angus, "and my mother."

"Kate, who ran away?"

"She ran away with my father."

Greataunt Margaret laid her long, slender, beautifully kept hand upon Angus's arm. "Young man," she said, "this is the first time I have heard that fact. I did not know it. Lydia did not know it. No such word has reached us. . . . I give you my word of honor. Do you know where Lydia has been?"

"No."

"She has been with me in Paris. She has had no communication whatever with Rainbow, and knew nothing of what happened here. She came back to you—to you. She believed your father still alive. She didn't know, doesn't realize now, that you are anybody but Angus Burke. How could she know? . . . You should have seen her and been with her during these long months, young man. . . . Then you'd know. . . . She

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loves you, sir. That, and no other reason, is why she came back."

She saw that he wanted to believe, but dared not believe.

"I am telling you the truth," she said simply. "She did not know until you told her in this room."

She watched the movement, the alteration, of Angus Burke's face, and, Spartan as she was, she saw him dimly through a mist. She saw a transformation, a marvelous transformation from stony grief, from heartbroken determination, to wonder, belief, joy. . . . She saw a face that had appeared to her at first to be dull, phlegmatic, incapable of emotions, become endowed with life, with mobility, with a wonderful sweetness and expressiveness. She witnessed the miracle of Angus Burke emerging from himself, shaking off the weight of things that had been, shaking them off forever, and coming finally, gloriously, into his own. All these things she saw, and, at last, she saw gleaming in his eyes a great relief, a joy, a hunger—a welling up from a heart which had lain cold, weighted, bitter. . . . She saw him start toward the door. . . .

"I'll call her in," said Greataunt Margaret, and she went out of the room.

Angus stood hesitating now; afraid now, du-

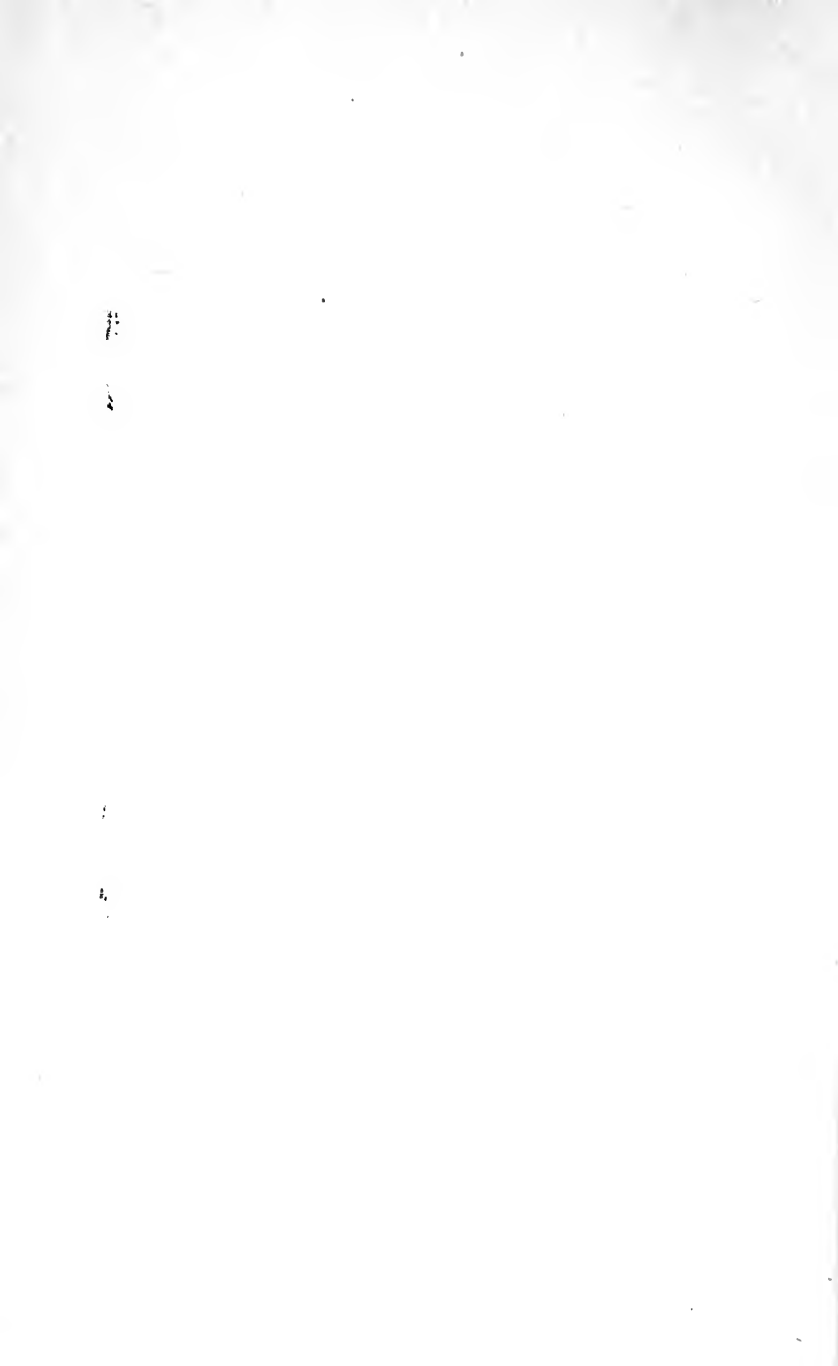
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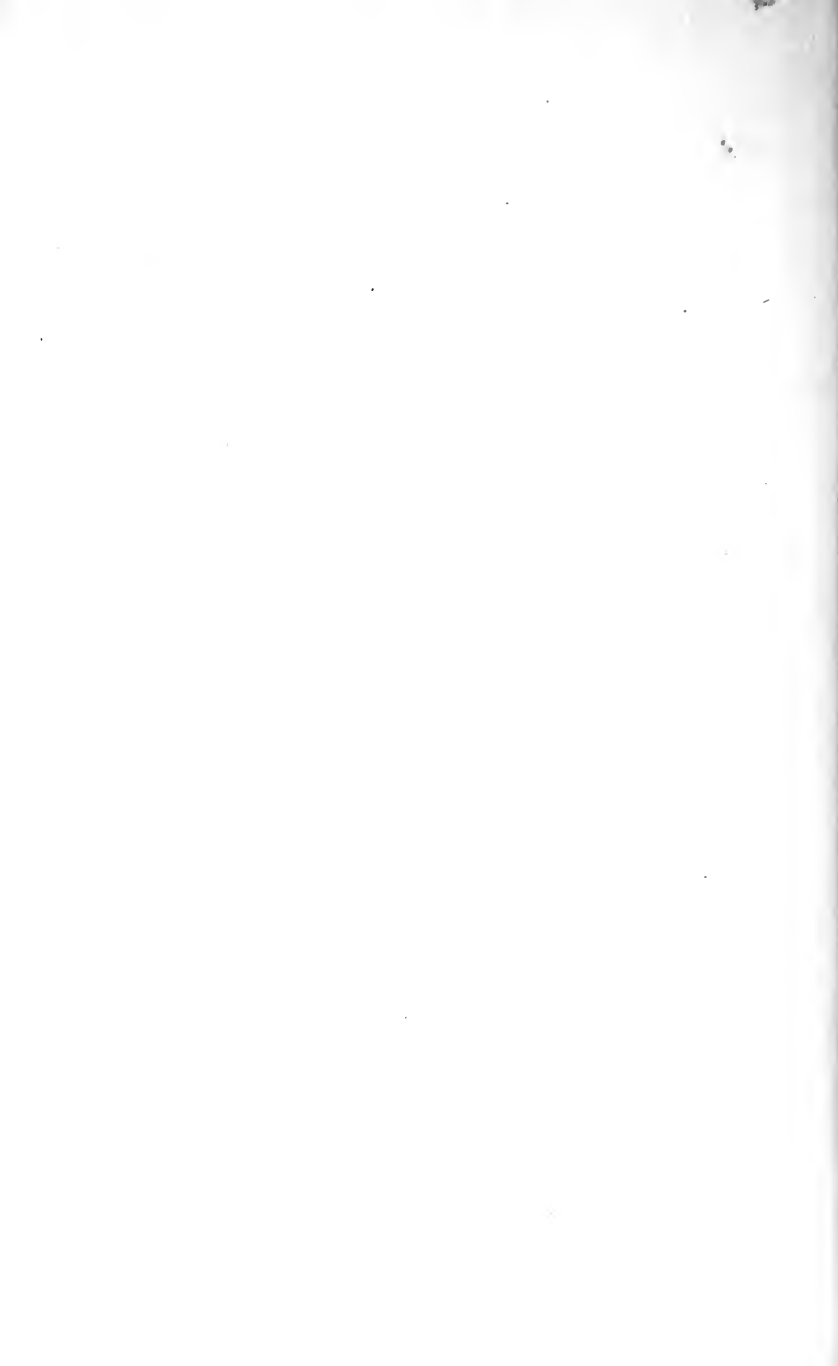
bious now of what might come. . . . Then Greataunt Margaret led her *protegée* to the door, opened it and pushed her inside, herself remaining without triumphant. Angus took a step forward, his arms half lifted toward Lydia. . . .

"I didn't know," he said. "I didn't understand. . . ."

Lydia lifted her eyes to his eyes, stood gazing, holding herself back from him until she could be sure. He approached another step, his eyes pleading. . . . She smiled, reached out and touched his cheek gently, timidly. "My dear . . . " she whispered. "Take me . . . Hold me . . . Never let me go again. . . ."

THE END





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